



THE LONDON APHRODITE

edited by Jack Lindsay and P. R. Stephensen

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BEAUTY'S BEAUTY

John Ford
1586 - 1640

John Gough
1929

VOICE *Allegretto* *semplice p*

Can you paint a thought? or

PIANO *p legato*

num - ber Ev - 'ry fan - cy in a slum - ber? Can you count soft

poco cresc

(colla voce)

minutes rov - ing From a dial's point by moving? Can you grasp a sigh? or

3 *dim.* *p*

last - ly Rob a virgin's honour chaste - ly? No oh no! No oh no!

cresc. *f* *mf*

mp yet you may Sooner do both that and this, *mf* This and that and never miss, — Than by *cresc.* *allarg.*

mp *cresc.* *allarg.*

an *f* y praise dis-play, Beauty's beauty; *p* such a *p meno*

f *p* *diminuendo*

glo-ry As be-yond all fate, all sto-ry, All arms, all arts, *cresc. al fine*

tempo *tempo* *cresc.* *mf* *cresc. al fine*

All loves, all hearts, Greater than those or they, Do, shall and must o-bey.

f *f*

LEADING ARTICLE

FOOTNOTE FROM A WORK IN PROGRESS BY NORMAN DOUGLAS

THAT discomfort, that European stomach-ache from which all of us are suffering, that moral constipation, has been traced to a variety of sources. I become more and more convinced, with increasing years, that the roots of the mischief lie far back in the Roman point of view. The shoddiness of our ideals—the shoddiness of all our ideals moral and political—is a heritage from those unimaginative roundheads, with their ingrained vulgarity, their imperialism, their pernicious doctrine of the *raison d'Etat*, and the welcome they gave, as vulgarians naturally would give, to imported pinchbeck like Christianity.

We have not yet recovered from those thousand years during which we hacked and burnt each other in honour of that creed; we have to thank the Romans for the Thirty Years' War, the Spanish Inquisition and other interludes which have coarsened our mental fibre to this day, and blunted our apperception of finer issues. No religion is worth fighting about. The displacement of Buddhism in India by the earlier cult was on a grander scale than anything in Christendom, and yet, I believe, quite a bloodless proceeding. Buddhism, by the way, is about 600 years older than Christianity. Nevertheless, its history contains "not a single instance of those religious persecutions which loom so largely in the history of the Christian Church." And the Romans, by accepting Christianity, paved the way for our cult of those fetid "masses" whom, in accordance with New Testamentary injunctions, we are now breeding as carefully as if they were Pekinese spaniels and who, in return, have imposed on us by law their own fatuous and degrading aspirations. These are our two social legacies from the Romans.

The political ones are likewise two. Firstly: that tiresome standardising mania of theirs destroyed the more delicate tissues in the national character of people subject—however superior intellectually—to themselves; the crass monotony of Roman theories of life and government, of their very architecture—however ill-adapted to local conditions of race or climate—settled upon the whole world like a frost, that chilled all indigenous and divergent blossoming. Everything stereotyped and conventionalized! Needless to say, we have followed their example in those parts of it over which we have cast the net of our own administrative system. Secondly: the state-idolatry of the Romans, their toga-tomfoolery, has converted European nations into a pack of mongrels snarling at each other.

Newspaper editors find it a profitable business to stimulate these nationalistic promptings, and to dwell on the catchword of patriotism. Safely esconced behind their desks, they exhort our youngsters to fight for their country. Who fights for his country nowadays? Half a dozen decrepit field-m Marshals; nobody else. No European country is worth fighting for. What next! Our youngsters fight, because they are kicked into the trenches. They are kicked into the trenches, because we have absorbed the "civic romanus" nonsense of those self-inflated *parvenus*.

THE PASSIONATE NEATHERD

A LYRIC SEQUENCE

by JACK LINDSAY

INVITATION

Open the garden-gates !
Here, masters, stand the Hesperides wide for you.
For each a dawn-girl waits,
dressed in the sun's silk, buskined with the dew.

Pale in Spring's gold it lies.
Come. All earth's lovers have found its fabulous roses.
Its towers float in the skies,
a wall of scents its bastioned secret closes.

Flowers do its ramparts raise,
colour has mortised it safe and apart.
Kiss, kiss ! & the sun's maze
untwines the simple wonder at its heart.

EARTH REBORN

If mankind died at twenty-five
(save poets & musicians)
and only lovers were left alive
to throng their exhibitions,

O what a happy naked earth
would tend the lutanist
whose songs of love would change at once
to kisses & girls' kisses.

Sweet metamorphosis of chords
back to the love that lent
music to kisses & deciphered
words for the lilac's scent !

Lovers would come to utter thanks
by silence of the embrace
before some frame where out of paint
burned Venus' face.

And children born in beauty's glance
would build the earth anew
with skiey flesh & the dance's madness,
and flowers crystalline with dew.

I say this, whom a garden saw
conceived beneath the eyes
of Myron's lounging Discobulos
where all the flowers were spies.

ALCHEMY

Gardens for love ! The moon will make
a garden anywhere,
if you but net it in her hair :
star-flowers powder the air :
earth to dark petals shake.

Night will be terraced with a mist
of marble : statue & urn
amid the cloud of cypresses burn :
stars, fountaining, to spray turn :
if your eyes are kist.

THE SHEPHERD'S PIPES

Hyacinth-bells have rung the hour
when every girl must stray
to read her fate in the dew's flower
and hear what the woods say.

This hour to lovely loss has knelled
a score of maidenheads,
and the flowers' music has upwelled
around their fragrant beds.

And I have taken Kate with me
through woodways to discover
whom the magic dew has glassed to be
for this Springtide her lover.

CONCEIT

What lovely forest-girls have been !
I'd rather vainly chase
Daphne than take some yawning queen
who'd doze in the embrace.

And (so one thinks) although she ran
from that fierce Apollo,
I'm a kinder smiling man . . .
she'd most likely follow.

THE EARNEST SCHOLAR

I've spent a third of life on sleep
and since I've grown a lad
a third more poetry has used
and girls a third have had.

I grudge the time I sleep & eat,
I long once more to be
with diligent mouth learning the delicate
hollows of Lily's knee,

or talking with Venus of the night
Hephaistos called out, ' Hey,
I have you wedged, adulterous pair,
try now to drudge away.'

MOUNT IDA

When gods in shepherd-masques were gay,
and Venus had a crook
and, felt cap on her parted hair,
gazed beauty in a brook,

then I caught hands with Marion—
her prettiest smock I tore,
but that at the next fair I'd buy
a better one I swore.

The piper chapt his mouth, he blew
so loud for us, so long;
our shoes were full of grass-seeds
ere we'd worn out his song.

And when he'd numbed his fingers, then
we danced ourselves, alone,
Moriscos to the moon's music
in leafy kisses blown.

And then I tore her smock once more,
but now she didn't care,
and asked no oath that I should buy
another at the fair.

ON A HOT DAY

I looked in the well's small room of peace,
its enamelled patch of air,
blanched by no cloud, carmined by one glassy apple,
and dark with my hair.

Even then the face burned out :
a moment flushed :
like some strange roseate flower of crystal light
where sky on water crushed.

Rose it, a water-wraith ?
or did some dream,
tinged with a wilder sun, from heaven's bank dive
air's winding stream ?

Straight it burned away,
leaving unrest in me
for those cold eyes blue mid dark warmth of lashes,
and their mockery.

THE BRAVE GIRL

In a mad maze of wheat and sky,
 isled in this poppy-nook . . .
 come, Jenny, if we stand
 we're seen from every hand,
 so let us lie
 where but the fleering gossip-sun can look.

Ah, sunburnt girl, here she who steals
 kisses from the day,
 must pay for every one
 hot penance to the sun.
 'Then let us pay,'
 says Jennie, kicking the stubble with her heels.

A HAPPY ENCOUNTER

One garden-kiss more pleasure yields
 than twenty fading through blind rooms.
 I'd even rather choose bare fields
 where only cheap-eyed tansy blooms.

The sun spins smooth-walled Danae-towers
 of clear-hewn air & asks no rent,
 and elves in guise of impish flowers
 paint all our bodies with their scent.

And once, as from a kiss I raised
 my head, I saw to my surprise
 an oak ungnarl its knots & gazed
 full in Priapus' kindly eyes.

A USE FOUND AT LAST FOR VIRGINITY

I'll take revenge on pithless girls
 who turn their backs when lovers plead
 like she who shrugging from Pan's touch
 dried to a brittle whining reed.

For on this pipe memorial
 of her insipid chastity
 I'll blow a song will leave a pair
 of lovers under every tree.

So from a fruitless, dodging wench
 I'll cram the Spring's delighted hours
 with crops of kisses that outnumber
 its fields & fields & fields of flowers.

EPITAPH

Here Eunice lies,
 poor little one.
 What shall we give her?
 spilled from the sun,
 this shining cloud of
 the white-gold cherry-tree . . .
 snap off a small branch
 and give it to me.
 Give me a thick branch
 of its woolly snow,
 and sprinkle the dew
 of its scent below
 on this one tall poppy
 and lay them side by side
 in the thinly burning shadows
 of this eventide.
 For she loved the Spring,
 and in the Spring she died.

What more shall we give her
 than poppy and cherry?
 Not a thing more; only
 let us kiss and be merry.
 For here on her own grave,
 dark to your view,
 faintly, daintily dancing
 over the spikes of dew,
 in flame of flowers enskied
 under the dim even,
 her bright ghost wrestles
 with a lad of heaven.

MERCHANDISE

The sun flutes pillars of tall light
 for you, Lettice, & me.
 His temples rise in every glade
 in delicate masonry.

We who have Spring for house, for purse
 who own the prodigal rose,
 walk in the paths of afternoon
 the sun's broad porticoes.

Magnifico of love I stroll,
 mine by this kiss's right
 stuffs of the lily, cool sleeves of air,
 and marble of light.

LOVE'S PROGRESS

Girls that the Spring held wooed & won
with kisses thick as flowers
welded by the clustering sun,
dawdle through autumn-hours.

Past is the time when love's surprise
doth its first proud onset wreak,
fruits load with russet the slow skies,
mouth lingers on cheek.

And there is space between each kiss
to talk of unsmocked breasts,
twine fingers close, that way & this,
and whisper naughty jests.

WINTER NOT SPRING LOVE'S TIME

Now when cold winds ruffle feathers
of sad damp birds,
and breath thickens air, its warmth curdled
into mists of cold,
then girls who sleep alone deserve
to manger with the herds
and taste the worst that frost can do
in some loose-slatted fold.

So may cold pinch & thump them blue
until they lift the sheet,
may ice go sharp-toothed at each nerve
and crutch each loveless leg !
Winter's the season snaps all pride
and brings them to your feet ;
and though all Spring's lure they defied,
Winter will have them beg.

CREDITOR

Summer has pulped its fruits & come
unto its empire's bound,
and it has crimsoned out each plum,
toothsome & round.

The moon has wrought her daintier rite :
into a drowsy plume
gathering up her feathery light,
on them powdered bloom.

Has summer done its all in this ?
It has defrauded me
unless it ripe Joan's fledgling kiss
to full-limbed ecstasy.

THE EARLY GIRL

When Spring grows steady in the skies
and suns have cherub-faces too,
then you must ape their hearty guise
or else the Dunce of Spring are you.

Fool's-cap of sunlight for your hair,
coxcombs of laughter, take—
now folly's bells the flowers wear,
babbling colours wake.

And early girls that jump from bed
whispering to one another gaily,
not for a mere dawn-posy are led
to wander afield daily.

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

I shut my eyes & kissed. The dark place tingled
with a thin twitter of strings
tuning the silence edged with glamour :
a harp's twinged mutterings.

I kissed. The quiet was brayed with sound,
life clanked with buckled stride.
And faint with twitching past the centuries
women's voices cried.

The hoarded silences crashed in my ears.
But ere her breath returned,
her lips, in that cold body alone alive,
on my lips burned.

A QUIET FELLOW

Some men go fishing for mermaids,
some lie on belly all day
in hopes a nimble dryad
will loiter that way,
some men are never contented
unless they're killing a dragon
and bringing it home to a wench
huddled creaking on a waggon.

I have no such ambitions—
to sit on a tree's frail tops
and snatch at the moon's ankles
and pull her till she drops.
I'm satisfied with Bessie
who in love's pranks will join
for a simple tawdry necklace
or any silver coin.

NOON-MADNESS

As I lay looking at the noon
through golden lashes of mine eyes,
I saw a strange thing
where the oleander-blossom frayed against the skies.

Flowers tumbling into girls,
girls snowing into flowers—
each petal flaking
resolved into a streaming girl, O petal-showers !

Eyes of the mischievous sky,
hair out of scents distilled,
O oleander-noon,
O lily-lustre of silence with naiads filled !

The whole sky reeled with flowers,
then the sun, bursting through,
scattered to nothing
this bubble of flower-girls swimming the globed blue.

A JOLLY SATYR

As I was kissing Meroe
and Meroe was kissing me,
sometimes both at once,
sometimes taking it in turns,

a laugh whinnied through the shadows,
a shape I could not see
hurtled overhead, leaping
from the startled ferns.

'Look,' said Meroe. In the pool
the water with a muddy whirl
hid its bed, then clearing showed
a hoofmark, nothing more.

'What was it? Did you see?' I asked,
but the foolish-dimpling girl
smiled & shook her head & kissed me,
kissed me madlier than before,

kissed & kissed me.

LIFE DAY BY DAY

He called the grooms : Panurge & I
 decided it was time to leave,
 so down the hill I went
 with Panurge trotting slipshod by my side.

I looked back : the enormous skies
 awash upon each foundered eave
 round the dwarfed house bent
 with tentacles of running colour dyed.

Said Panurge, ' It might well be worse—
 3 chambermaids besides the cook,
 and then the daughter too,
 as we divided booty we each had 5 :

a week's wine without opening purse,
 and the 8 pewter-pots I took . . .
 though we're chased out is true,
 soon at another inn-sign we'll arrive.'

Stars were being quietly thrown at the sky.
 ' Let's reach it then,' said I.
 Panurge, ' Do you remember that Sluberdegullion
 of a scullion. . . .'

TOILETS FOR THE PENNILESS

The Moon provides Cosmeticks free
 to beggar-girl & marquise.
 She sprinkles orris-root of light
 on any one she sees.

Hair that a whole week took to dress
 with plait & curlicue,
 the Moon's soft ringlets in a flash
 will carelessly outdo.

Though one should sit from morn to night
 wrapt in her powdering-gown,
 lovelier tresses to the Moon
 a beggar-girl lets down.

Smash all thy lotions, all thy vials,
 take Moonlight for thy friend,
 and smoother washes of clear beauty
 she to thy cheeks will lend.

DIONYSIA OF THE SUN

The sun plants torches in the grass
for spring's bright bacchanal :
violets are alight, lilies, narcissi,
roses & wildflowers all.

The sun raves on. The thyrsi break
on every stone-dark pine.
The milky petals mix their flames
with scents of satyr-wine.

Night has no dream to add to this.
The earth is mad with spring . . .
And now thy nakedness has set
all the sun's birds to sing.

EXPERIENCE

He climbed the cliffs where dwell
the great-winged siren-girls,
and snared one in his net ;
down bubble-ways he dived
to the Nereids' house of shell,
gave his kisses for their pearls—
they took him for a pet,
and with 21 he wived.

When he grew tired of water
and girls creaming through foam
with their sentimental song,
the satyr-villages he essayed.
There he stole Krambe's daughter
and carried her off home
(her horns scarce one inch long)
to be his kitchen-maid.

The Country of Toppling Noons
where skies fall, next he sought ;
in the Land of the Brazen-thighed Queen
who crushes men, uncrusht tarried ;
and the Island of Clashing Moons ;
then, returning safely, thought,
' Now that the world I've seen
I'll settle down & get married.'

SUCH CAPACITY HAVE GODS

Dawn, chafing out beyond the hills,
 had stamped the sundust through the air
 so that it misted over them
 to tell she waited fretting there.
 Zeus, tussling in Alcmena's bed,
 felt darkness wither overhead.

The lark had even met the light
 that carolled through the topless sky
 when Zeus, raising on his palms,
 saw it & answered with a cry,
 'Back! till I give you leave to come.
 I've Heracles to get.' The lark fell, dumb.

HELEN YOUNG

Its brooch undone, her hair slid down.
 The river drank
 this willow-tide of gold as she leaned
 over the bank,

her little breasts not nipped yet with kisses.
 She leaned to spy
 If some slow trout with eager nose
 chanced there to pry,

Or if (more like) she there might dare
 to kiss-stolen breath
 some slender Hylas swaying out
 of lilled death.

What sees she tangled in her locks
 that her breasts stir
 and the wavy stream of water-gold
 rushes up at her?

What torches of the besieging years
 stifle there?
 What scent of a gathered kiss, of a world of lovers,
 & sweet words spoken,
 burns in her hair?

AT THE BRINK OF NOON

Pan's noon on all! Even lovers
 in mid-kiss stay:
 the kiss faints, but the lips
 do not move away.
 Silence is taut. The lark
 is tombed in the sun.
 Linnet & sparrow are secret,
 everyone.

Silence leans this way, stretches . . .
 let one pulse-beat cry,
 one grass-blade spring, searing
 the scarred sky,
 and earth, air, heaven will clash
 with tumult here. . . .
 Crouches the sun's brood of laughter
 or Pan's fear?

HIDDEN

Sudden the voice cried,
 'Are you there, are you there?'
 'Here,' I replied.
 Through bleak gulfs of air
 pleaded the whisper, 'Where?'

Stray haunted breath
 in darkness wreathing nigh
 and hovering back to death!
 From what dismantled sky
 flitted that cry?

I to thy rescue haste.
 Thy dark star declare,
 taper the eyeless waste . . .
 Only through vast despair
 cried again, 'Where?'

FLOWER OF EARTH

Earth-child, what is it you do
 at this dark pool?
 Gaze then, & blind your eyes
 in a starless mere.

That here I walk is true,
 hand in thy hand;
 but in the chanted dew,
 and dew-dabbled skies,
 trees leaved with light & seas
 tossing gulls of foam at the land,
 flowers on fire with the sun,
 flowers, goblets of the moon
 I see an earth not here,
 not thine, child of earth.

O two I find of worth
 alone of all thy hordes,
 they only on earth can stamp
 the adventure of the skies
 (I care not for the rest):
 pirates whose sweaty laces
 flaunt powder-smells upon
 some orris-scented breast,
 and girls who like a lamp
 to light their embraces.

BEHIND THE EYES

Whom do I expect to see
 when into a dim pool I stare?
 Strange still appears that gaping Me,
 that water-zany with green hair.

But ever it seems that I will gaze
 in eyes far stranger than my own,
 some jade-tressed denizen of the air,
 some bubble-monster of cold stone.

Or do I fear it will betray
 that shag-haired fiend who blackly broods
 over the unrippled lake within
 my spirit's scornful solitudes?

THE PASSIONATE NEATHERD

Heavy with crystal heat is noon,
 and slow with sheep that creep
 staining the icy pallor of its flame:
 white heaps of glazed wool.

Any can flute to the cool moon;
 but who, as I, defy
 this palsy of sun wheedling the lazy veins,
 and sky of dazed blue?

With cymbals of light the sky is full . . .
 still am I true to you—
 try me & find my kisses, undaunted by noon,
 leap through this graven sleep.

DECAY

Silence has lichened this old garden, silence has stained
 the trees with ooze of Time's darkness & run
 its clammy sap through leaves with menace veined,
 seamed to fire-webs by no fibre of the sun.
 Silence is set on edge as by the cry
 of bird-voiced ghosts unheard beneath the air.
 Fighting for breath the uneasy shadows lie,
 and tolling shadows in the belfry-sky
 toss fears to flit like bats from spire to spire
 of night crusted in the cypress-towers;
 and scorched with silence, moss browned & brittle is there,
 and there the dead lovers meet as in days gone by.

But where we see scaled havoc, they see flowers—
 the drift of smoky silence sparkles with fire.

STORM

A hush grows marble in the air, heaven's palaces
spire the poised silence, like a thrower who lifting the discus,
each sinew trembling on the edge of action, braces.
When will they topple & mortar of the skies shower on earth?
The trees loll, the nymph within dares not stir, a satyr
stops in mid-crunching of a nut.

The wind's flat blade strikes on the face of silence,
tasseled with whipt leaves. Violet fires of menace
scud from the horizon, clouds that dreadfully seem
mute in the screaming wind shouldering their way.
Darkness is moving. The wrenched backs of trees
kneel to the pushing hand of the sky & thunder
stamps & falls as some brazen giant is hurled
down ravines of clattering air.

Out in the open!

The satyrs flee to the caverns, the nymphs are wailing.
Out in the open, through the hissing trees, among trampling
hoofs of clamour,
crying thanks for danger & the jagged splash of terror
lightning in the blood.

I am immortal, crying!

ATLANTIS

Templed with dark roofs of water
and columns of shifting light,
pale, pale thy statuary
sleep through the emerald night,
lanterned only by Nereids' eyes
that in the dim-paned sea
shine unearthly bright.

Tell to the depths thy secret.
No harp of the air
shall speak that mystery,
no bird shall dare
cry but one note of its sweetness aloud,
no shell of the sea
pronounce thy lair.

Yet in air, bird & tree
thy liturgy sings.
O drowned beauty,
giant in the mind thy melody rings,
and earth obeys
a voice shut in shattered marble of the sea
in wonderful days.

MENACE

What will this blank page show
 when from fantastic ink
 my pen decides to write
 what, to myself unknown,
 my daimon-self has willed?
 Girls, girls, a Spring of girls:
 flowers sipping at the light:
 malicious faces of the intent dead
 smudged in the lilies now:
 some sopt splendour of winecups spilled
 when love with malmsey flown
 could not wait for bed
 but dared the bench's brink?
 Daimon, choose!
 Silence. One cannot say
 when he will obey.
 Nothing. He'll then refuse.

Ah, from my mind's dark forest breaks
 fury of swords & laired with death I see
 a horseman plunge at the closing enemy.
 Turn of a lace-thick wrist,
 and silence takes
 once more the driven night.
 O lonely cavalier,
 trapped in my mind's fierce fear,
 in darkness fight
 that girls may be kissed
 by the light of spring's sweet flowers.

PERFECTION

I said, I will not use a word
 till I have essenced it with love,
 soaked it in perfume of kisses, burned
 juniper of laughter through,
 coloured it with voice of bird
 and trees shaken with light,
 and the sun housed small in dew,
 the phoenix-sun.
 When these ardours are learned
 it may be good enough,
 though most like it too will fail
 in that dread comparison
 with the spirit's nightingale.

I said, it will not do.
 Bird that criest so beautifully
 in those forests of the moon,
 be not too hard on me.

THE WARDEN

What did you see on earth
now you are home again ?

' I saw a man sprawling
bloody in a lane,
swart battlements of fire
where earth's ruffian towers
crumbled against the sun
like dazzled flowers,
a highwayman pistolling,
and thieves watching one
long-necked on the gallows
tattered by the sun,
these & another man sprawling
bloody in a lane. . . '

Did you see nothing else ?
So far & in vain ?

' I saw tavern-girls who gave
without asking your name,
and fine ladies who masqued
did much the same—
the world's blazing jewels
heaped at their feet . . .
I saw the kisses on their mouths
as they walked the street.
And the sun rose at their bidding
to light their limbs with silk,
and the moon put flowers in their hair
and stroked their cheeks with milk.'

Pass, friend, all's well.

ETERNITY

The last lovers are gone. Silence opens
like a swung door, or jerked up in the blade
of quiet grass your head had smoothed,
stands upright in the glade.

But love that pageanted the afternoon
still moves in mirrors of the air.
No kiss is lost. Here while the sun is mage,
beauty has her lair.

Though all the orchard with its tumbling fruit
and bare-kneed girls this day
ash into ruin & in enchanted silence
centuries tremble away,

yet for the next that come with touching hands
the veils will uncloze,
the garnered kisses paint ecstasy in the blood,
laughter drip from the rose.

[All these poems were written May 1923]

THE POOR ASTROLOGER'S GIFT

TO HIS SWEETHEART

by EDGELL RICKWORD

HE : "I could not hang great gems to rest
like moons or blood against your flesh ;
nor softly cloud your moonlight breast
in fragrant star-shot mesh.

"I'd won no marble throne to raise
mere grace above the stumbling crowd ;
nor vast horned herds had I at graze,
to make your passion proud.

"But a spontaneous species browsed
the bosky pasture of my groins,
engendered when great Sol caroused
in *Taurus* and my loins.

"These, my sole subject creatures, thrive
beneath majestic, thumb-nail law ;
all mildly live and kindly wive,
(except the glutton jaw).

"So, for the tribute Beauty drew,
out flowering from the calyx frock,
I could cast but a pregnant ewe,
the fairest of that flock."

SHE : "More eager than Campaspe's bee,
the pet I cherish for your sake
clings at the very root of me
and sucks its nurse awake."

HE : "From this forced watching of the stars
we can the better judge our Fate,
and learn if past these sensual jars
our inmost selves may mate."

SHE : "Fresh forces from the *Goat* recruit,
rather, and so our night employ,
each tendril sways a living fruit,
pledges of active joy."

HE : "From the vexed House the *Crab* controls,
see, our twin destinies remove,
and reach as manumitted souls
the *Balance* of true love."

SHE : "Sky-ecstacies seem so austere,
darling, my novice ardour fails.
Can't we assay love's richness here ?
Let my breast be the *Scales*."

THE WHIRLED AROUND

REFLECTIONS UPON METHUSELAH, ICHTHYPHALLOS, WHEELS
AND DIONYSOS.

by P. R. STEPHENSEN

BEFORE the Age of Wheels, wheels existed ; but under control. Now the whole world is full of wheels, connected by belts and pulleys, wheels within wheels. Men are dimly to be observed moving about amongst the wheels, oiling them and tending them a little, secretly afraid of the whirring and the clatter. The wheels have caught us, with a vengeance, and we curse our grandfathers for having set them in motion. The wheels of the grandfathers are visited upon the grandchildren. They are whirling us centrifugally away from our centre. Can we devise any brake before we are broken on the wheel? This, I suppose, is the modern problem.

Let us survey the whirled around. Not, like Shaw (and Wells) aloofly devising yet more mechanisms to control the wheels ; and equally not, like D. H. Lawrence, singing swan songs aloofly, prophesying the smash-up of the wheels, modern Luddite rioter.

Here are the wheels, and here we are on the wheels. Start from that, and stick to it—stick to the wheels, control the wheels, control ourselves first. Any escape in phantasy, whether progressively with simple enthusiasm to Utopias of Methuselahdom, or retrogressively, despondantly, to the Ichthyphallos, is a doubtful relief to the mind actually in motion ; and it is certainly no conquest of the wheel. Here we are, on the wheel. Is there any fixed point graspable to serve as a braking point?

The Individual Psyche, I suggest. It is on the wheel actually, it is whirled and muddled and giddied upon the wheel ; but it is not part of the wheel, it can move against the whirl, or across it, or with it. Sliding or staggering, wobbly, it can still move. It has a reality which is not the wheel's reality : its own reality. It can look upon the wheel, see itself whirled, being whirled. It can stand up. It made the wheel, and by god it can brake the wheel. The concrete individual psyche. Not a transcendental postulate, but ego, doer and maker, ego the wholehogging exister.

The concrete individual psyche, differentiated. Not that sprawling sociological abstraction, either, the Community. On the wheel there is no community. Only millions of half-stunned individuals being whirled. Who could hope to unite these almost-automata for collective action against the wheel's whirling? Certainly not the God of Society, conjured by Wells (and Shaw) from the vortices of air above the whirled. And certainly not the Ichthyphallic god of Lawrence, who dwells in an ocean of dark blood, oblivious of everything, particularly wheels. Let us refuse to be flung off the wheel, I say.

From Lenin to Stalin the practical Communists are the only actual revolutionaries in the modern world. They operate at any rate upon the wheel, not above it and not below it. They

tackled the bourgeois with bayonets, in the factories and streets. When they saw a bowler hat they plugged it. *Epater le bourgeois!* One soldier of the Red Army can introduce more reality to social discussion than ten drawing-rooms full of daring modern novelists and playwrights.

Therefore let us have practical Communism, world communism, quickly, ruthlessly, and efficiently. The bourgeois require shocking, all will agree. Well, shock them properly. Expropriate them. They started the wheels going, now they cannot control the wheels. Expropriate them; smash them on their own wheels. Let us have proletarian ownership of the wheels, then. The axles will be better greased, the wheel will whirl more steadily. More rapidly too. More dizzily?

Probably. Though when the wheel runs more smoothly it may be easier to ride upon. One hopes so. Therefore let us have a Communist revolution . . . let it revolve.

There will still be wheels. And upon the Communist wheel, revolve it ever so smoothly, there will still be individual communists; each with a pulse of blood. I speak of a rhythm uncontrollable by politics. Throb, throb, throb: the cardiac valves do not work upon pulleys and endless belts. Throb, throb, they open and close to my personal rhythm. Throb, throb, throb, ego is a column of blood. This is so simple everybody must know it: ego is an engine without wheels, driven by blood-power, one man-power, energy from the blood's heat.

— Lawrence and the Ichthyphallos?

— On the contrary.

Lawrence mistrusts ego. Lawrence would submerge ego in a dark emotional flood. The Edwardian sociologists whom Lawrence succeeds knew and know nothing about ego as blood. They wanted to lead ego up the garden to a Methuselan paradise of loinless intellectual super-humanity. Lawrence rightly is indignant, urging human values against these abstract intellectual constructions. Hail Lorenzo: he affirms ego as blood. He is the first popular writer in two thousand years to affirm the blood-quality of ego.

But such blood! Dark blood, brooding; primitive blood, blood of our ancientest forefathers, prehistoric blood; amœbic blood: the blood of sub-humanity! Must we then choose, whirled, between bloodless super-humanity and oh so dark-blooded sub-humanity? . . . Why not just bloody humanity; or, perhaps, even, bright-blooded super-humanity?

Shaw (and Wells) are unconscious of the Unconscious. Being Edwardians, they know nothing yet of Freud. Their phantasy-escapes from the wheel are born in a dry crackling of brain electricity. It is possible to spend a life of evenings with Wells (and Shaw) without ever once becoming aware of oneself as flesh, without even becoming aware that ego is a complicated texture.

But you cannot read Lawrence without an awareness of the flesh. He is all for *feeling* versus *thinking*, this pillar of dark blood! Ego must not think, ego must not construct intellectually, ego is instinct. . . .

... How nearly right! How infinitely more right than Methuselah and Britling. But——

Ego must yearn deathwards. . . .

How utterly wrong! More wrong even than Britling and Methuselah; for they at any rate do not deny Consciousness.

Why deathwards? Why not lifewards? Blood does not yearn towards annihilation in the bowels. Blood yearns for more life. Such is blood.

* * * * *

About this, there has only been one statement made since the modern wheel began rattling: Zarathustra's *Blood is Spirit*. The vulgarisers are at work upon Nietzsche now, inevitably. The solid mass of thought which Nietzsche flung into the philosophical maw is slowly being digested, transmuted into struggling corpuscles and carried to the extremities of the organism. Shaw with his impertinent degradation of the Beyond-man in terms of intellectual super-humanity, was the first and worst vulgariser of Nietzsche. Now we have Lawrence, a corrective to Shaw, advocating the sub-man, all loins, all blood. Shaw and Lawrence are both monists, one of intellect, one of emotion. Both are distorting the Nietzschean conception of the Beyond-man, *whose blood is spirit*; Shaw impertinently by draining the Super-man of blood; Lawrence denying *spirit*.

I do not object very strongly to this distortion and parody of Nietzsche's thought in its process of infiltration through popular playwrights and novelists. It moves, it moves. . . . But in the last resort ego will not be submitted either to Methuselah, the abstract intellectual, or to Ichthyphallos, the abstract emotional. The pure intellectual and the pure emotional are both homicides. Ego thinks *and* feels; ego's thinking is of the blood, ego's feeling is of the mind. Ego is human, all-too-human, brains and delighted loins. Methuselah cannot be willed because ego's blood is a pulse, filling abstract concepts with its throb, throb, throb. Ichthyphallos cannot be achieved, because mind cannot achieve mindlessness.

Yet there is a difference between Shaw's ignorance of the Unconscious and Lawrence's attack upon Consciousness. Shaw can hardly be blamed for disregarding the Freudian researches, for his mind had become ossified before these became available to him. All the Shavian *Life Force* rigmarole is of course derived from Bergson; and Shaw, who never had an original thought in his life except about the Salvation Army, could scarcely be expected to make any development of Bergson's vaguenesses except in terms of more vagueness. But Lawrence's attack upon Consciousness can scarcely be condoned in terms of Edwardian ignorance. A conscious attack upon Consciousness is not an ignorant attack.

And Lawrence's attack upon Consciousness must be made with the weapon of Consciousness. There is no other weapon, there cannot be any other weapon; and it is this which makes the attack itself more than slightly ridiculous. You can never become, by will, a peasant or an animal once you have been fully human. Consciousness emerges again even after drugs,

after hypnosis, and after G.P.I. in flashes. The perfected Ichthyphallic condition is a condition outside humanity ; it is as purely an abstract ideal as Shaw's bloodless "super"-man. Lawrence's own power, the energy of his creative purpose in forcing this atavistic concept upon modernity, is the best possible refutation of it. The Ichthyphallic condition is a drugged condition, a relapse and a weariness, with no creative integration possible, the constructive mind being doped.

Nevertheless, Lawrence's affirmation of the blood's reality is the most important gesture against anæmia being successfully made in the modern world. We are all as tired of tiredness as can be ; fed up with cleverishness, the dying flickers of abstract intellectualism. Lawrence will make men aware of the blood. His vogue may even be as great as Shaw's was ; because the Ichthyphallos is a great corrective to Methuselah. Yet we shall not be persuaded to abandon, because we cannot abandon, either body or mind ; blood or spirit, what you will, the two complementary factors in our integrated selves.

When it is realised that ego cannot develop either a bloodless Consciousness or a mindless Unconsciousness, an escape from the monistic bags' bottoms might be indicated. Men might even begin living *consciously and on the basis on their instincts*, however absurd this may seem to the present-day disciples either of Shaw or Lawrence. Actually a new balance of blood upon spirit, or spirit upon blood, might be achieved, such as has only once been known on earth, and that temporarily : the Hellenic balance. Two thousand years shame of the blood might then be overcome at last.

It is for this reason that I say Hail to D. H. Lawrence, populariser of the blood's actuality. No matter how pervertedly he is stating it, his power is such that he will establish it as a modern convention. Lawrence will make men aware of the blood.

But it is Dionysos, not the Ichthyphallos, who will have the last say. Delighted blood, not dark blood. More life not more death. Conscious blood, blood as spirit ; ego's completeness.

Meanwhile the wheels are whirling, ego willy-nilly upon them. Let them whirl. They are an external reality only. Let them screech, ego can oil them. Let them grind exceeding small, ego can adjust the screws. Let them clatter, and honk, and whistle, and snort, and stink, and splutter, and rumble, and rust : ego can stand by, and refuse to clatter, and honk, and whistle, and snort, and stink, and splutter, and rumble, and rust in unison with them. Not all the dam-machinery of all the dam-engineers in the whirled can hold up the current of ego's living blood coursing gaily to the old Ocean where Leviathans swim.

GLEANINGS

by RICHARD CLOUDESLEY SAVAGE

At La Poupelle
Dogs, cats and horses
Live in hell;
The little children, in their play,
Cast stones at them,
And drovers flay
The smoking flanks of geldings dropping phlegm.
Coarse-clad, raw-voiced,
A peasant storms at prisoners hauling sand,
Too crazed to understand.
(I saw him drench the beasts on cobbles grey,
And then the tailboard fell,
Spilling his load of sand,
Whereat my soul rejoiced.)
Dumb things, you live your purgatorial day;
We still await our hell.

"Monsieur, parlez
en Anglais
à Marguerite." "What have you read?"
"Un peu, Monsieur," she said.
"What are you reading now?"
"A book by Capus; 'Rob-in-son.'"
"Do they allow
Young girls in schools to browse upon
Rank pasturage disdained by Bazin's cow?"
"What is eet zat you say?"
"Well, have you read Defoe's great 'Robinson,'
His 'Robinson Crusoe'?"
"No, him I have not read."
"You ought to do so.
What English classics have you conned?"
"Well, in ze school we say
Ze speech of ze Seconde
—Ze words of Mrs. Tanqueray."
"Imphm! Well, well,
What else?
That's hardly a book . . . well, well!"
"And I have read some parts
In Eenglish of air own gre't Rabelais!"
"Ah, good. He loved the arts!
Garçon, garçon, cognac et eau de seltz!"

Above the 'Monaclin,'
Above the brawling routs
Toss oceans unbeheld of man,
Toss oceans unbedizened by the doom
Of louts
In the billiard room,
Where clang,

With sharp, metallic paws,
 The music-boxes blessed by Santa Claus,
 While sirens sing :
 ' Oh, les fraises et les framboises ! '
 A chanson new,
 In the mist of drunk applause.
 My God, it's true
 —Bamboula-Jazz is King !

CRACKED DOOM

by DOUGLAS GARMAN

EXPLORERS of night's solitudes and day's
 Derelict spaces, stripped by the sun's rays,
 Dishonoured brokers, gambling in falling stars,
 Inveterate loungers at celestial bars,
 Dominoed angels, Fausts debarred from hell,
 Or any needy bawd constrained to sell
 Mind's pitiful flash trulls as virgin still,
 Where shall we look for, whence shall we distil
 An elixir or charm to bring us ease,
 Who only ask to live and be at peace ?

In the slow twilight of late afternoon,
 When offices are closing and the moon
 Lies in the tree-tops a unique burst flower
 For any sentimental pair, that hour
 Limpid with whispered, not yet broken vows,
 When shadows run in dingy herds to browse
 In leafless gritty parks, and side-streets lie
 Sunk in portentous, drab expectancy,
 The sweating city, straddled in gross birth,
 Blurts out her frowsy litter, for whose mirth
 We, heaven's remnant, spend our last thin breath,
 Treading their fancy through a dance of death.

Then stars prick out their far, cold word of doom :
 But answering sky-signs through the darkness boom
 Their plangent summons, till the stiff feet run,
 Twitched into motion by that voltic sun,
 And once again the queasy souls aspire,
 Reluctant phoenixes from banal fire,
 Trusting eternity's hoarse silences
 May yet be broken by a prayer or kiss.
 So at the shared, compulsive touch of pain
 Mind's withered landscape is revived again ;
 Trees sprung from terror, flowered with sharp lust
 Blossom in trampled gardens where disgust
 Frees bright, seraphic birds with suppliant eyes
 To bruise their wings against Hope's crumbling skies :
 Till morning breaks, light's creaking curtain falls,
 And day's thin stupor drips from blistered walls.

MAISIE'S POEM

by ALEC BROWN

THIS small door, silent to the darkening street,
These stairs with the carpeting worn bare
By sliding tread of many clients' feet,
This dim landing lit by the strident gas—
An avenue of air limp from decay
Stirred by hot murmurings through the flowered wall—
Leads up to Maisie, the sweetest whore of all.

Ah, but hear again the key grating, drowned
By a light word, muffled by a dry caress,
Opened and closed, and the lock's returning sound,
This evening—the day's work once more begun
Between the decrepit walls, guarded
Down the short corridor beneath the glaring flame
By the hushed and natural conspiracy of shame.

And thus they enter : Maisie and any guest,
A stranger, suffered during a paid-for hour,
Impatient for passion, or maudlin at her breast—
She a parched desert, a mockery of fields,
She mechanical and patient on the bed ;
And when his stiffened limbs fall satisfied and weak
Perfunctorily pats his hard contemptuous cheek.

And then, alone, she eyes the printed flowers,
Festooned, a memory of garden, about her troubled bed,
With some sensation of departed hours ;
And, ageing now, good ten years here at least,
She palps the firm body of her full-cupped breast
And, with a smile of sunshine, lolls easily to wait
The genial merchant who has not been of late.

Hope, in a stupor of the years gone by
Grown in her hothouse brain from day to day
Amid all these embraces dead and dry
Finds flower each time a favourite client comes :
And eyes, beneath the bruised lids, strike with fire,
And hands grown supple are animate and trace
Uncertain lines about his sombre face.

He middle-aged, an earnest man and stout,
In haven from his cares, with easy words shed clothes,
Turned low the light, and, safe from eyes without,
Fondled her round and proffered limbs at ease ;
Drank in her humid eyes ; and felt her hands
Clasp in excited grasp his iron-grey head,
As who would keep a loved thing from the dead.

She—saved up, for him her lust held back,
Him whom she saw on the highway of his life
Pace evenly upon the downward track—
Sprang to his whim with rigidly clenched breathing,
As when, first time, a girl, she lay aslant
The greensward in the wood, with disorder of attire,
Her soft limbs yielding to a lover's quick desire.

Two ageing creatures rose from a hasty bed
 And sat bent forward, smiling, ere he left ;
 Then, in the glow of the incandescent shed
 Maisie lay idle through the waning evening
 Knees to chin and arms across her breast
 Whose soft caress was all she knew of truth
 Borne on the waters of unchanging youth.

CRANES AT SUNRISE

by ALEC BROWN

A CITY sprawling at the foot of hills.
 A navigable river cuts it through.
 Factories through nights of May distil
 A gossamer of smoke, a ghastly dew.

The factory wharves lie by the eastern gate ;
 The hills are to the south. The railroads dart
 In serpent silence ; glittering and straight
 They deadly strike, and pierce into the heart.

But iron on anvils in a sullen roar
 Raves like a sultry nightmare all the day,
 And on the quivering body of the earth
 Foul burning winds from forges spurt and play ;

And, rent round noon by sirens, a strident town
 Beats stricken wings against a burnished sky
 Till turgid evening flocculent filters down
 On scaly walls ; and blackened shadows fly

Through shallow air. The monster sleeps, and only trace
 Of its ungainly limbs are swaying lines
 Of empty streets of lamps ; and for a space
 Down in the darkness creeps the scent of pines—

Then night recoils. Shy from the virgin veil
 Of early day the sun wings from the plains ;
 And high o'er the walls beneath, lusty and hale,
 From river mists slip free the rigid cranes ;

And then, oh marvel ! on dusky limbs a bloom
 Of golden down, by glow of dawn revealed,
 In eager line against the lingering gloom
 Limns their gaunt sinews that can lightly wield

All that they will, all that they will. They swing
 Off this stained sullen ground with lusty might
 Aloft, like a lover, lightly, whom they adore, and bring
 A panting city into morning light !

TALK

by BRIAN PENTON

I

"THAT brings me to the fundamental hypothesis of my theory, which I shall be able to make clear if you will allow me to pass briefly over a significant development in modern physics. . . ."

"Excuse me, sir. One moment. I must go in there. Really I must. It is quite necessary. Very sorry. But just one moment. Sir, just one. . . ."

As he seems a sincere and trustworthy man I nod and offer no resistance. His red face, irregularly pitted with eyes and nostrils, like a Dutch cheese the rats have been at, hangs on his right shoulder as the swinging doors of the lavatory gulp him down. "Just one moment, sir."

He was such a quiet little man that I wait fifteen minutes; but he does not return. Who would have imagined that he, so bald and small and attentive, could have so much spirit? Fugitively I think of going in to find him, but it is scarcely probable that I would recognise him again: he was only a large piece of undifferentiated flesh hanging to an ear creased and buckled and furred like a biscuit going mouldy. I remember his bald head, because when he drowsed once and I leaned across the table to wake him up my breath tarnished its brilliant polish till the lights above us, reflected there, seemed to be shining through a fog. I abandon him and go into the street, staring eagerly like a whore into the faces that float past phantasmagorically on the gold gauze transparency of sunlight.

The unfulfilled orgasm of talk. Nothing shatters me so completely as this conversational *coitus interruptus*. A clot of words under my brain, damming hot blood against the temples, presses insistently forwards and outwards, like an exploding germ, and there are only empty holes of space before me.

I nod to my friends, who hurry by simulating business with features matted in ecstasies of concentration. They know me very well. If I could capture them, anchor them to a bar or a lunch table, they would pretend to listen. Not that they would deceive me and not, of course, that it matters. All this talk forces us at last to know that we are unique worlds spinning on separate axes tilted away from each other so that we see different facets of the stars. We drop words, like lumps of glass that analyse the spectrum in their bevelled edges, and they slip down through the darkness of your world that hangs away from the sun, through the twilight of yours, and through your too radiant brightness; and as they pass you try desperately to imagine at what edge I must have been looking in to see that subtle harmony of colour. Under these circumstances it doesn't matter whether you listen or not.

I have arrived at the corner of Martin Place and Pitt Street, where every afternoon about this time Joan passes on her way to tea. Joan wants to seduce me so I can talk to her assured that she will never interrupt or yawn, debauch myself with talk

and then leave her, like those girls who kiss with their mouths half open whatever the date is.

Sometimes she makes an intelligent comment. I have often noticed that with women. Suddenly they will swing a penetrating light on to that inch of infinity where we are groping round for a foothold on the razor edge of an idea. I have never known a man to do it. And how sensitive they are to subtleties and delicate definition. Men stagger about suspiciously shifting the monolithic terms to examine their geological fabric. "What do you mean by Life?" "How do you use Spirit?" Is it some ghostly exhalation of our minds, some invisible ectoplasm stamped with the perfect form of our ideas, which captures the understanding of a woman while she does not listen to our words and melts into her blood—into her blood rather than her brain—without any hospitable effort from her, a sensation of what we wish to announce. So complete is this understanding sometimes that her laugh, her kiss may reveal all we have been tormentedly writhing to elaborate for our own comprehension. Even when we have demonstrated each side of the monoliths to a man he will rarely see the smudged face of a god we are trying to show him there, for him we will never lift more than the most pallid shadow of our ideas out of chaos.

Yet suddenly I remember that only the women who love us are ever *en rapport* with us, comprehend the texture of our knowledge. Does it not seem necessary, therefore, that in our universities professors should talk of Einstein only between kisses?

We search for that perfect style of packed sentences where every word is an Ajax who balances glaring, scorching suns between his shoulder blades, but we never achieve it and scarcely ever find it except in the brief phrases women murmur in passion. Sometimes they can let the fine-drawn wire of a single word down into profound pits of blackness and bring up strange things for our contemplation, but we are rarely tuned to appreciate so delicate an achievement. We do not know that the words they pass to us when lust has split open the craters under their consciousness are packed with lava of joy and torment. For the perceptions of men these words are too dense, grumous. We must have them beaten out into tinfoil. Perhaps, then, we would find the secret of compact expression in the love whispers of Lesbians?

As I eagerly search the crowd for the lovely vacant face of Joan the clock in the General Post Office strikes four thirty. Two hours with that quiet little man have left me exquisitely swaying on that first point of intoxication whence you must either give yourself up to the hands which reach out of the earth to tug you back or climb swiftly to more precarious Heavens. To me talking is the refined and apothetical experience of the senses. Ideas, like warm young girls, rush out and clutch me in a delicious rape, hammer me dizzy in their lubricious excitement—thousands of nervous hands clutching me, thousands of voices screaming in my ears. I surrender to their warm bellies. A brothel of ideas. The tender breasts of abstractions.

As I turn to see what the time is now a hand grabs my cuff and jerks me round.

"Hell, I'm having a lovely day, I don't think. Garden party, cabaret, interview. Get me some tea. None of those stinking cafés you inhabit, thank you. For God's sake. And not the Ambassadors. Janet Gordon's there. She got the job on the *Guardian* at fifteen quid a week writing fashion articles. With her bust. Like elk horns."

I wrench my arm away and try to escape. She is a thin woman who works on a newspaper. Her steady, lustreless, black eyes are like the excreta the sheep left behind last summer. Her cheeks and thick lips are as pallid as Koscha meat. She has a low voice, the edges unravelled by incessant talking. For a long time I have been convinced that she is not a woman at all but a succubus. She goes about stabbing her talons into the brains of men and sucking them drier than if she took them into her vile witch's bed on Walpurgas Nacht.

The complex currents of traffic on the pavement split like a kind Red Sea before my indignant flight and close hissing at my heels. But, talking incessantly in her burred voice, she follows at my elbow, leaning confidentially to my ear, like a persistent tout for Cairo brothels.

"Take me to the Australia. Did I tell you what happened to me the last time I went there? The new waiter in the lounge, you know, the dark one with the red ears. Oh, you must know . . ."

I plunge recklessly into the traffic, but nothing kills her.

"I said: 'By God I'll get you sacked, my boy.' He said: 'Madam' . . ."

Actually she represents the painful efforts of a vacuum to take form. As a journalist she has been moving among the inane great of Australia so long that she has lost all sense of her personality. She talks to grasp some concrete, sustaining crag in the frothy wash that has broken over her mind since its dykes of self-esteem gave way before the batterings of those bull-necked, neighing people spacious in the possession of dirt.

Nothing depresses me more than the sound of someone talking. The futility of it scoops sick holes in my bowels. I turn and face her, trying to find some ragged place in the mesh of words where I can bite a way into conversation, but her voice goes on and on, like a tap leaking on a hot, insomnic night. I turn and hurry to the hotel: at least I may watch the pretty girls there.

We find a seat in the Wintergarden. Scent from flowers and bodies, half sweet, half revolting, from tobacco, coarse and suffocating, from rum, wine, cocktail, subtle and entwining, burst up our nostrils and drench away all vulgar stinks of the street, so dusty and hot and ridiculously in earnest about work. Here at this hour are only laziness and the first delightful stages of drunkenness and lust. Passengers from inter-state trains, crusted with dirt and exasperation and all manner of hungers and curiosity foreign to this fantasy of light drinks and laughter, have been hurried through to their rooms, and the fat men of business, who come before dinner to gambol with their women

and beer, are still fulfilling ideals of Service. The doors shut off the clamour of traffic, so that I can hear ice tinkling in glasses four yards away, and everyone murmurs secretly. Young girls cross their knees, showing a strip of garter, and I sense dangerous emotions huddled in the thick air. All these people seem to be waiting for a sign to stand up and start kissing: if only someone were brave enough to begin the place would be a delirious lupercalia before that tall waiter, who is said to be a Russian prince, reached the door.

But nobody moves. Why? Surely all the sunshine of this hot land cannot have soaked this lovely flesh and left it inert, as passionless as it pretends to be, sitting here in clothes uncrumpled by embraces? Does it merely stain their cheeks and their necks and the first slope of their breasts, merely tickle their bellies with sweat and make pools of their navels? Does it leave them with less than the restless fire it gives to the grape and the sugar? spin the world on, fecund and inexhaustible, yet stir in them no more life than it stirs in the rocks?

There is a great fear in them as they fiddle their spoons in their tea cups, burn their mouths with punch and liqueurs, talk about Firbank and racehorses, the scandalous old Mrs. Vittlepot, the masterpieces of Marie Brizard, cures for cancer, losses at bridge, and the dirty old man of Algiers—a great fear that holds them shuddering on the verge of action. All the dull fire in their eyes, all the mad laughter in their mouths, all the lust curved up in their breasts, and the sensuality in the parting of their lips they thin away in words. Talk, talk, talk. It is their escape from action. Words suck the blood out of desire which that sweep of throat, that fugitive revelation of flesh on breast or thigh flares in their skulls.

Words, words, words: they drip on the air, down the overhanging cliff of silence, a slimy distillation. The thrill of suspense collapses, precipitating me, before the spectacle of this timid, futile dallying, into profound despairs. Suddenly among the teacups and the expensive decanters and the glasses stained ruby and emerald and gold, and all the gorgeous panoply of drink; among the perfectly creased trousers and the dresses that have no right over such limbs to look as though the warmth of the iron was still upon them; among the bell boys insolently sleepy and the dehumanised waiters, and the young men staring, staring but never so much as moving their feet, and the lovely girls peering, peering but never so much as turning their heads, I want to stand up and shout "To the Lupercalia, you moribund Romans. Action—more Action."

But already the succubus is beginning to rob me of that mysterious fluid which is Life, the unanalysable spirit of my vitality. Though I have barely enough strength to reach for the whisky bottle her cheeks are burning. Is it my blood, rushing under her skin, which throbs in the stringy veins knotted behind her transparent ears and washes from her face the metallic lustre of decay? As I decline she talks more feverishly. Passing down to my bladder the whisky does not, as usual, uncurl its long nails and lacerate my cringing tripes.

Action indeed: I am no longer capable of it. I try to fix

my attention on the lovely flesh around me and wink at an alluring bundle of it that bends a slim trunk across a table five yards away. When she smiles back a vague thrill stabs my bowels and I play with the impulse to go across and speak with her, but somehow it slips from my nerveless brain. She draws in the skirts of her cloudy organdie dress to make room, but my blood has picked up from the saturated air a horrible disgust of action. A pretty girl, yes a desirable girl, but what a lot of trouble, kissing and fumbling and arguing and beseeching, and so on through the tiresome ritual of seduction. How much absurd movement must centre upon her. Because I continue to smile as though there is something funny on top of her head she gives me up as impotently drunk. I am not, quite.

II

Of course I did not intend to bring Lesly to my flat, but here she is. Perhaps she brought me. I awake from a doze and find her still talking—an office cat, sub-editors, the dowager something of something.

I leap from the chesterfield. "What's the time? Seven. God. I've got to go. An appointment." But already my will, gathered with a sublime effort, is beginning to melt.

"Please, dear boy. Don't disturb me yet. I'm so comfortable. Beside I do like hearing you talk. I won't stay much longer."

Yes, she has almost finished sucking my soul out of the back of my neck, which, as I collapse into the upholstery, I turn towards her so that she may take the rest.

The bottle of whisky on the table is empty. I want to cry.

"Did I tell you about Peggy Weaver and the Earl she tried to interview?"

Is she taking my brains out through the little perforations she has made in my skull? When I lift my head it is so light that it rolls uncontrollably on my shoulders.

"The other night there was a hell of a commotion when the last edition. . . ."

I open my eyes and look at her as she talks towards her feet. Bones stick out on her flushed cheeks and on her right shoulder which she has bared to the cool wind from the harbour. No breasts tent her light silk dress, and her mouth falls at the corners into wrinkles feathered with black down. But in self-defence I must do something.

I slip my arm along the back of the couch and draw her towards me, fingering through her expensive dress her ribs and rough skin, like the side of a canvas canoe. She falls back unresisting, her head on my lap, and smiles up at me. Leaning over I kiss her. It is damned uncomfortable to bend my head so steeply, but for a moment the place is strangely, restfully silent. This is so great a reward that I contrive to make it a long kiss, though she has a loose false tooth which moves backwards and forwards, making me shudder slightly with fear that she can bite pieces out of my lips secretly without moving her jaws.

"Poor old Cheyne came rushing into my room, just as I was tying my garter. . . ."

I kiss her again on the eyes, tenderly pressing back the round, soft balls, which move continually under my lips as though she is staring into the roof of my mouth.

"He was torn between his desire to faint at the sight. . . ."

I silence her for another minute.

"Talking about moving pictures. Did I tell you . . ."

Undeniably her mouth is warm. Life ebbs slowly back into my brain, into my limbs. I kiss her throat.

"The manager came down and I told him. . . ."

Rising from dim tangles of lace her chest is softer than I expected. Lazily I drink up the mixed perfumes of powder and flesh and heat gathered through a day in the sunshine, and reaching over the table put out the light.

"He stamped up and down the foyer . . ."

My fingers play at being men astride the precipice of her neck, tumbling down on to the great plain of her flat chest.

"I said: 'I'll have you sacked. . . .'"

With interest I kiss her mouth again. There is an explosion in the back of my head. I gather her up and shower a gust of mad kisses on her bony shoulders, on her neck.

"I terrorised him. I said . . ."

I am crushing breath out of her. She wriggles a little.

"Well, just at that moment . . ."

"I love you, dear, you are too, too beautiful."

"Silly boy. . . . What d'you think he did next?"

"You are as beautiful as Cresside——"

"He ran away. Wasn't it priceless?"

"I've always wanted to tell you. I've always been mad about you."

I sob my breath against her parchmentic skin.

"Of course we apologised all . . ."

She is a white haze in the darkness. How warm, joyous, frank.

"Beloved, you are as bewildering as . . . as Cleopatra."

"Oh, dear . . ."

Then for ten minutes miraculously she is silent. Perhaps for twenty. Of two lusts the greater is suspended, but only suspended.

She gasps on again. "Seems he started as a publicity man. . . ."

I stagger out of a scented darkness where I have been smashing my head against a steel wall and collapse on to the chesterfield. The wall pursues, crushing me between its flanks, squeezing my bowels into my mouth. A prickling vine trails over it. That is the scream of a comb going through her dry hair.

"I said: 'Now look here, young man. Do you want me to . . .'"

III

The clock strikes. One, two. Keeping my head erect by a colossal effort of will I hold my breath and wait for it to continue three, four, five, six.

It doesn't. .

I feel no surprise that it is four hours late, that my watch is four hours late, that dawn has not begun to create the world though it was due half an hour ago.

How can I be surprised by these comparatively commonplace disorganisations when I am not surprised to be alive, though the disintegration, commenced hours ago, is complete? Nerves shredded, skull perforated, brains crushed out, limbs stiffened, senses killed, mercifully killed.

How could I feel surprised with the vagaries of church and post office clocks and with the caprices of the sun when I am not remotely interested to hear God walking up and down, up and down Heaven like the man who used to have the flat above me.

Least of all am I surprised to know that she still talks.

How tenacious matter is! Mind, senses divellicated, yet my flesh seems warm and firm. Not that it surprises me. I just notice it, as I notice that time is out of joint, that she is still talking, that God has fallen over a heavy piece of china.

"Positively I refuse to tie this bow again you naughty boy. You remind me of the time. . ."

I stagger back into the corner of the chesterfield.

Eighty expensive minutes of silence altogether. I have no more resources.

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## DINER DANSANT

by ALEC BROWN

SHE, mirrored on the lucid evening, preened,  
A queen at table, whose ladies be all still  
Swans seem stem the hesitating tide ;  
And her deft idling fingers' frail gesture,  
As lightly, entering, she framed her virgin lines,  
Gave gentle lie to any thought of ill  
Impatience his patient features screened.

He, blocked squarely on the realm of blinding white :  
The reminiscent cloth, the untouched field  
That lay before them : lay yet brighter far  
For that calm torso, held back in black and waiting,  
(Passed, the prelude, and all the courteous turns  
Of wine, of dance, of word, of glance,) to wield  
Her hidden thighs and breasts in common night.

# A PIG IN A POKE

by RHYS DAVIES

EVER since his sister had moved with her milkman husband to London, to open a business there, Ianto Parry had lived in lodgings. First with a meagre widow, who stinted him terribly in the matter of food, and who went about saying he was a miser and odd in his head. Then his next landlady drank—heavily on Saturday nights—and tried to beguile the very chaste Ianto into shady customs. Another was religious, and in her Ianto placed his hope. But she went out of her mind a year after he had taken up abode with her; and so Ianto, fuming and angry, flitted from lodging to lodging, finding no real resting-place for his stone-like head. A brown and cold-looking head, with eyes embedded in it firm as crystals, and a small lipless mouth. When he was thirty-five, after six years of lodgings, Ianto began to look, quietly and cunningly, at the women about him, with a view to marriage. Legs, torso and face held little interest for him. He examined the women with the thought of their characters uppermost in his mind. He said to one of his fellow-workers in the pit:

“There’s flighty Welsh girls seem to have become! Think of nothing else but jewellery and cinemas they do. Perhaps I’ll have to go down to Pembroke and pick a strong farm-wench. No ideas *they* have above their station.”

“Ha,” assured the other, “nothing but vulgar and bad they are down there. Take a pure woman when you have one, Ianto. There’s good thrifty housewives the English make, they say.”

At that an idea entered Ianto’s head. He had seen no woman in the Valley to attract him. So that when June came round that year he packed a little bag and took train to London for a stay with his sister and her husband.

“Well, Ianto,” said his sister, meeting him at the station. “Thin and poor you look. Scraggy.”

“Suffered I have since you broke up our home,” said Ianto in an aggrieved voice.

“Go on,” jeered Mary Jane, “why don’t you get married, you miser.”

“Come to London for a wife I have,” announced Ianto.

“How do the women behave up here, Mary Jane? Unreliable I find all the girls in Wales.”

Mary Jane was round and bright as a red apple. Her eyes, beads of blue glass, were like her brother’s. The little business she and her husband had opened was in an obscure turning off Praed Street, and all the six years she had lived in London she had never been beyond the Paddington district.

“Dirty and slovenly this old London is, Ianto,” she answered. “There’s glad I’ll be when we’ve made enough money to go back to Wales. As to the women, divided they are. Some drink and flaunt themselves without any fear, others work themselves worse than Welsh women.”

"One like that I want," he said with satisfaction. "A good worker to take back with me to Wales. Keep you an eye open for me and have a think over your customers' daughters."

"Quarrel with an English wife you would," said his sister doubtfully. "Too much of a miser you are."

They came to the little dairy shop, and in the living-room behind, Fred, his leggings cast off and his fat stomach escaping through his loosened breeches, greeted him from the sofa:

"Did you bring the cockles, Ianto? There's a place London is. No cockles nor Welsh cakes can you buy here. Gaunt in the face you look, Ianto."

"Lose weight you do in lodgings, Fred bach. Going to look for a wife up here I am. Tell me your opinion now of the London girls."

Fred lowered one eyelid and clasped his hands over his protuberant stomach, laughing lecherously.

During the days that followed, Ianto walked through the adjoining streets or hung about the shop, sometimes serving eggs and packets of tea therein. One evening he wandered into Edgware Road and stood for a moment outside the Underground station, gazing at a woman dressed as he had never seen one dressed before. He looked at her with the straight unblinking stare of the Welshman. She sidled up to him and, her head bent aside invitingly, murmured:

"Hello, darling."

His expression changed angrily.

"Don't you call me darling, you cheeky woman."

Her expression altered too. She hissed:

"Why the bloody hell did you look at me like that then?"

He related this to Mary Jane and Fred. His sister, her cheeks mantled in shame, said she must have been a bad woman.

"Very likely," added Fred. "There are many such in London, Ianto bach. Take you care when you pick your wife that she is a good egg."

On the fourth day of his stay, Ianto was gazing meditatively out of the shop window when a youngish woman entered and asked for a pound of butter.

"Mary Jane," called Ianto, "come you into the shop to serve."

He looked at the woman. She looked at him. She had strange pale eyes that could not be read, and her lips were large and drooping. Her dress was untidy, she looked hard worked. She spoke in a low voice, carefully, as though she desired it to be refined. Mary Jane called her Miss Lark. When she had gone out he asked his sister who she was.

"Lives with her mother, a widow, Ianto. They take in boarders for a living. Poor they are. But a hard-working girl Miss Lark is, I should say. Seems a bit short of gumption though."

"Taken a fancy to her I have. Tell me when she comes into the shop next."

Two days later Miss Lark came in again. Mary Jane called Ianto into the shop and said to the young woman:

"This is my brother, Miss Lark. Taken a fancy to you he has. From Wales he is, sober and steady in his habits, and respected in his native place." With that she left them together.

"Good morning, little Miss Lark," began Ianto, assuming a cheerful air, all the while eyeing her up and down. "What say you to a nice little walk to-night?"

The young woman stared at him nervously. She had thin dark brows over her heavy eyes, and she looked as though she had not smiled for a long time. She did not smile now.

"I don't understand," she hesitated doubtfully. And she dropped her glance into the jug of milk.

"Ha, ha," laughed Ianto, "coy you are. Perhaps if you prove yourself to my liking I might take you back with me to Wales."

She lifted her pale eyes. She seemed unwashed and a little bleary. "Are you having a joke with me?" she asked.

"Foolish it is to joke in these matters," he said with unction. "Wait I will at the entrance of your street to-night at eight o'clock."

"I'll see," said Miss Lark, going out nervously.

"One of the old-fashioned girls she is," declared Mary Jane to her brother. "Not a dancing-mad ape like they are to-day. Uncostly she will be to you, Ianto."

At eight o'clock Ianto, attired in his best black suit and bowler hat, waited at the corner of the street. A few minutes afterwards Miss Lark came slowly and carefully towards him. She wore a large orange-coloured hat, a strange voluminous dress of the same colour and a string of enormous wooden beads. As she seldom went out for pleasure, this finery was unusual. Under the dangerously balanced hat her face looked uncomfortable, as though some portion of her underwear was insecurely attached. She managed a chill unsure smile as she approached. Ianto was rather astonished at this new vision of her. In the shop she had seemed submissive and hard-worked, a drab grey. But he realised that women in London were not as those in Wales. No doubt Miss Lark was very fashionable.

"Well, you came then," he began.

"Oh, I came, yes," she replied with a little damp archness. "Where shall we go, Mr. . . . Mr. . . ."

"Ianto people call me in Wales. Begin you now. And show the way to a park. Some trees I want to see."

They climbed to the top of a bus, and there Miss Lark held the sides of her hat with both hands, while its ostrich feathers swam like orange flames in the breeze. She still smiled, a worn smile endeavouring to be arch.

"Don't you think the air be-yewtiful?" she asked, drawling the words out luxuriously.

"Stale as an old pit," he replied. "Wales is the place for air."

"Very lovely, Wales, isn't it?" she said in the same affected voice.

"Like heaven it is."

"I think I should like Wales," she said. "I dream of living in the country."

They walked in Hyde Park, they sat beneath a tree. Miss Lark, twisting her beads and stretching her legs, upon which grass-green stockings hung loose and untidy, nervously talked of things he did not understand. She had read a novel and began a laboured description of it. He cut her short.

"What say you to marrying me?" he said, slapping his hands down on his knees, his eyes cautiously surveying her.

"He, he, he," she laughed excitedly, a cluster of bubbles emerging from her mouth. "This is so very sudden. Oh dear. Pardon me. Ah, I am so totally unprepared for this. Dear Ianto, how nice of you." And she wiped her mouth and straightened her hat, which had slipped askew.

"Work you'd have to," he continued, "... hard. Not afraid of that you are?"

She calmed herself and looked at him in mournful sentimentality.

"I'm so used to hard work," she said. "But you'll be good to me, you'll be a good husband, a lover?"

"Say what age you are?" he continued.

"Twenty-eight," she said after a little pause.

"Suffered much have you in illness? Nothing the matter with you is there, I mean?"

"I have abounding health——"

"Cook you can, I suppose?"

"I do all the cooking at home," she asserted.

"Not a fancy man with food I am," Ianto went on. "Plain but good I like it. And I like the water ready hot when I come home from the pit. Not luke-warm, like I've had in lodgings."

"The pit?"

"Yes, a collier I am."

"How sweet and romantic! To work in the depths of the earth. But do you get very dirty down there?"

It was arranged that Ianto would call to see her mother the next day. Miss Lark went home in a dim ecstasy, her hat contentedly aside, forgotten. She was a romantic young woman and her bedroom was full of flyblown sixpenny novelettes. She was ready to swoon into the arms of any man. When she got into the house, her mother, her five lodgers departed for the evening, was snoring in a chair, two empty bottles of stout on the floor. She was awakened and told the news.

"Accept him, accept him," Mrs. Lark advised beerily. "You are going off a bit, Flo, and a man's a man, even if he's a collier. I'm told colliers come home quite black and they need scrubbing all over every night. But he's a man, Flo, and a man is a prop in one's life and eases things a bit: and squeeze all you can out of him, Flo."

## II

Ianto went back to Wales, obtained a house, furnished it scantily, told his friends in the pit what a grand wife he was bringing from London, and, groaning at the expense, returned to London and married Miss Lark at a registry office. Miss Lark was disappointed in that; she had expected a church, music, flowers, carriages, a long sweeping train of white lace.

But Ianto scorned such fuss. He conceded to a short honeymoon, however—and they went to Southend for three days. In the train back to Wales the new Mrs. Parry took Ianto's hand and whispered :

"I'm not sorry to be leaving London for ever. I've had a hard life. No father, and mother drinks. Oh, my husband, you'll be kind to me?"

"Darro now," muttered Ianto, "there's sloppy you are. In the train too. Take your old hand away. Don't be so shameless before other people."

Sighing, Flo looked out romantically through the window. She wore a pink dress with large flowers and a yellow sash round her waist. Oblong yellow beads hung from her ears. These ear-rings annoyed Ianto. He noticed too, artificial colouring on her face.

"Done up like someone bad you are," he said when they changed trains at Cardiff. "Go you to the water-closet and take those frip-fraps off, and the stuff off your old face. Cheap you look and near to my home you are getting."

Flo, however, refused to do as she was bid. "I am quite capable of deciding what suits me," she declared with icy coldness. In the train that crept up to the Valley she remained silent. Ianto's brows were drawn ominously. Flo looked at the squat dirty hills with increasing dismay. She saw ugly rows of houses in the Valley, tracts of waste land, derelict pits, a stream of filthy water, collieries half-hidden in clouds of coal dust, a dreary, dreary length of ugliness. When they alighted from the train it was raining hopelessly.

"I thought," Flo said in a cold small voice, "that Wales was a lovely place. This is worse than Bethnal Green."

"Get out, a homely place is Wales. Look at the mountains too. Fresh they seem after London."

Flo sniffed. She stepped mincingly along. She was stared at, her clothes; the sombre women and grey men stared, boys hooted. Ianto looked at his wife now in distaste. In the Valley she seemed grotesque.

"What's that loose gown you've got on? Loud and in bad taste it is. The women down here dress respectable. Black things you must get."

"I'm not one of your women," she said biting.

Her dreams died. Ianto looked common, here in his proper setting. But she thought of Hilda, the heroine of the last novel she had read. Hilda's trials had been mountainous, her husband, a rascal, had once even laid the whip about her. Flo quivered.

"Oh, Ianto, you'll always be kind to me!" she said in a sudden wail. "I feel lonely."

"You do your work well and with gumption," answered Ianto, "and a steady husband I'll be."

### III

The cheap little house was near the mine—a cottage, rather damp, set aside from the row of dwellings nearby, clinging to the side of the barren hillside. For the first few days Flo was

content, arranging the furniture and looking at her new saucepans and crockery. Ianto told her the chief duties of a collier's wife: the heating of pails of water over the fire, ready for his bath in the wooden tub, the necessity for a hot, very substantial meal immediately he came in, starving and tired, and how to dry his pit clothes. Flo cried after the second day; she wept into the tub of black water that she dragged from the kitchen while Ianto settled himself comfortably in his shirt before the fire. She had to scrub the dirt off Ianto's back: she had to see that everything was very warm for him. Then, worst of all, when everything was done and they sat together in the kitchen, Ianto would not talk to her, or indeed even notice her. After he had dressed he would sit at the table, lay open the newspaper under the oil-lamp, and read carefully and laboriously all the evening. Once she cast herself on the mat before him and laid her head against his knee. When he looked down at her she put her head on one side and smiled softly and invitingly. But he looked at her in horror, his round lipless mouth wide open.

"Dear Ianto," she murmured, "dear husband."

"Up, woman," he cried angrily, "messing about down there."

He never called her Flo now. When he wanted anything he would shout:

"Mrs. Parry, fetch me my drawers."

She cried often now. She did not get on with the women of the neighbourhood. They laughed at her, her bright flaunting dresses, strange and home made, her ear-rings, sashes and her stockings that were always coming down: and, knowing her to be English, the old inherent hostility was awakened in the women. Boys and girls shouted after her. A few minutes after she had ministered a sound blow to one of them, an acrid mother called and furiously denounced the English sow. Flo quietly closed the door on the woman. The woman beat on it and threw a stone through the front-room window. And Ianto blamed her, not the woman.

"Serve you right. Going about like a dressed up Father Christmas. Plain and pious clothes the women about here wear. Not remarkable do they make themselves. A disgrace you are making me appear, Mrs. Parry. The men in the pit make jokes at me about you."

Then she suddenly turned on him murderously.

"You bloody cheat," she screeched, her mouth drawn back like a taut bow, "you rascal, leading me to believe that I'd have a nice life. Bringing me to a place like this, like hell. And what respect have you for a woman! Lower than a black you treat her."

"Woman," Ianto shouted, "curse you like that in a Christian's house!" And he groaned. "Ah, there's a lunatic I was to marry a dirty old Cockney."

Her rage was thin and searing, like lightning. She clutched a tureen that happened to be on the table and hurled it at him. He dodged, and it knocked over a vase on the mantelshelf.

"Dirty yourself," she shrieked, "like all Welshmen. Ah,

what a race. Scabs and uncivilised. Dung." Her heavy mop of hair was loosened, her eyes glared out. This war-like female was surprising. "But I'll show you whether you can boss it over me!" And she swept the table with her arm, so that there was a crash of crockery.

And Ianto actually wilted before her fury. His round little mouth lay open like the barrel of a gun, his glassy little eyes hung out. Later on, the next evening, after a cold hostile silence between them, she had, following a bout of crying, asked his forgiveness.

"A common and nasty tongue you have got," Ianto remarked unctuously. "Too shocked I am to be unpleasant about it."

"I'm so passionate," she sighed in a sorrowing voice. "My mother was the same. She used to say there was Italian blood in the family."

"Ach, don't say that," Ianto said in extreme dislike. "Bad enough it is to be English."

But he had his revenge. He announced later that he wanted to sleep in the back room, because her snores prevented him from having his rest. Though she protested she didn't snore, she haughtily made no comment on his removal to the cold back room. But she understood.

Another source of trouble was the chapel. Ianto was a respected member of Bethania. He took his wife there one Sunday morning as an introduction. She sat still and pensive through the dreary service in Welsh, the long prayers and hymns, the gibbering sermon. Ianto wanted her to go to Sunday School also. She refused flatly.

"I'm going to have a good rest on the only day you don't go to the pit," she said. "I'll never put my nose in that chapel again."

"Don't you go starting your heathenish London ways here," he said truculently.

"Be off," she shouted. "That's another way you make slaves of your women. Binding them up in your awful chapels, you louts."

And she had her way, by the sheer force of her scorn. Ianto sat in his pew, aggrieved and industrious in his prayers, the only married man minus his wife.

And then, some months later, she took to drink. One afternoon Ianto came home from the pit and found her asleep before the fire, a novelette on the floor, and a bottle of gin beside it. No meal for him, no hot water for his bath.

His rage was terrible. He beat her—took the strap from his waist and thoroughly larruped her. She screeched, bit and clawed him. They fell on the floor together and rolled over fighting. In the end she lay still, moaning and panting. But she got up and hastened to prepare food for him, glancing at him, terrified, with large shining eyes. He sat glowering and still raging.

Late that night she went into his room and begged his forgiveness. She clasped him tearfully. But he chucked her out savagely and went down on his knees.

"Oh Lord," he prayed, "forgive you me for buying a pig

in a poke. A heathenish Cockney she is, a daughter of Satan. Healthy was her body, industrious seemed her ways. But she is worth less than a farthing to me. Visit her with suitable punishment, dear one—done my best with her I have. Look you into my book and see how I have served you, how many are the entries on the credit side. Not deserving of this treatment I am. Only blind I was for buying a pig in a poke. Never did I lust after her, dear one. But at fault I was for not examining her spiritual body. Forgive me now. Amen.”

#### IV

From that time on there was open hostility between them. The house was neglected. Ianto's food was paltry. Flo would shut herself away in a grim silence for a whole week or so. And for days she would not be seen by anyone outside; the blinds of the windows would be left down during this period and a sinister silence hung over the house. Inside, Flo would sit or move about like some being with a dark doom in its soul. Her mass of thick hair would lay all loose and untended about her unwashed face, her eyes were inscrutable and withdrawn, like the eyes of a corpse. Then suddenly she would talk to Ianto, but mostly with abuse, deriding his country and its ways. Ianto tried to conquer her, but at last he would flee in disgust either to the week-night services of the chapel or to gossip with other colliers at the street corners.

“Taken to drink my old woman has,” he would moan. “Secretly she drinks up my money when I'm at work. There's a great lunatic I was to marry a good-for-nothing Cockney.”

His face became mournful, and dark as an unhealthy potato; and he complained too that his inside was going wrong.

Flo's mother died and Ianto hoped she would go back to London and take on the mother's lodging-house business. He informed Flo that such was his desire.

“My mother,” said Flo heavily, “was a lady forced to earn her living. My father was a sea captain. I am the daughter of people entitled to mix with the best in the land.”

Ianto was unimpressed by this splendour.

“Money there is in a lodging-house business in London,” he urged.

“I am a married woman and I intend to remain at my duties,” Flo observed sententiously. “So don't you think you can get rid of me, you Welsh Jew.”

“Married woman indeed!” Ianto shouted. “Prefer I would to put a nanny-goat in my bed.”

“By law——” began Flo, baring her teeth in readiness.

“Don't you come back here after the funeral,” Ianto shouted.

“Stay you in your Gommorah, where you are fit.”

But Flo returned from London and announced that her mother's debts were such that she would not inherit a penny. She had, however, managed to procure the gramophone, which object she had brought with her wrapped in an old Spanish shawl. Ianto was furious.

"What a bag of dry bones I married," he wailed. "All expense she is and not a penny has she got behind her!"

Flo ignored him, but put a record on the gramophone—an old-fashioned instrument with a pear-shaped horn. There was a sound of some maudlin waltz. Ianto ground his teeth and stamped out of the house.

Flo loved her gramophone. She would put on record after record, especially if she was drunk. And the records were all of sickly, old-fashioned music-hall songs and dances. Sometimes she would get up in the middle of the night, fetch the gramophone to her room, and begin a recital. Ianto made his usual unavailing protest—he would appear in the doorway in his long flannelette nightshirt and call down on her the curse of God. Her bland and jeering smile was all the reply he got.

A fanatical glare began to shine in the stones of his eyes. He dreamed strange dreams of her, he saw her in divers bodies—with a tail, or black, evil wings, with great flapping ears, or a hairy body. He arraigned God in the matter. God pursed his lips and meditated, presently asking the advice of Saint Matthew, who sat painting in the countries of globes before him. "How is her reputation standing?" asked Saint Matthew. God took down a brass-bound volume and looked Flo's name up. "Ha," he remarked, "a soiled woman she was before marrying Ianto Parry. Her mother's lodgers took advantage of her to her pleasure. A string of beads or a pair of ear-rings was her price." Hearing that Ianto shuddered in the divine presence, so that Saint Matthew looked at him with curiosity and said mildly: "Dear me, man, why is it you are surprised?" And Ianto wept in sorrow, "My ignorance of the world it was that led me to her harlot's arms. But only three times, Saint Matthew——" God rapped on the table before him and said, "Ianto Parry, leave I give you to punish her as you think fit. Busy enough I am with such cases." And Ianto woke, still shuddering.

"Up," he shouted to himself, "and strike!"

The wrath of the Lord was in his mien. It was scarcely dawn. He went to Flo's room and dragged her out of bed. He stripped her naked and emptied a pitcher of icy water over her. She began to scream, and at last was terrified of him. He threw her on the bed and took the belt. She leapt up and flung her arms round his neck, her legs round his body. He shouted in horror and struggled free. Then he gave her a couple of dozen stripes. She lay and moaned.

His face biblical and sweating, Ianto cried, "Thus the Lord instructed me to punish you. At last, woman, I know of your previous badness."

She rose up with an effort.

"My husband!" she wept, reaching out for him.

"Ach y fi!" he belched forth in disgust. And he fell foaming on the floor. "Horror is within me that a woman like you is under my roof." And he began to pray in Welsh.

From that morning she watched him like a fascinated cat. But he showed no signs of relenting; and she became afraid of his hard sinister face.

He appeared to be meditating some scheme.

He was. He wondered how best he could be rid of her without incurring any trouble on his own head. He fully believed he had married a bad egg, a woman with an evil past. And so the direst punishment was due to her. The hellish impudence of it—to marry him, a God-fearing, respectable Welshman, who had paid for a pew in chapel for the last fifteen years!

He looked over his insurances. The furniture was insured for a hundred pounds, Flo for fifty. If the house caught fire one night with Flo safely drunk in bed, he would have a hundred and fifty pounds and be single again. He sighed to be in that state once more.

Assuming great impatience with her one evening he threw money down on the table and shouted:

“Go from my sight, woman, and wallow yourself in liquor. Peace I want.”

She grabbed the money and laughed.

“You are getting wise, Ianto.”

And off she went.

He placed a box of paraffin-soaked shavings under her bed, and newspapers and rags in places likely to flare. The old stony cottage would not suffer much damage, and standing alone on the hillside, Ianto muttered, no neighbour's property would come to any harm.

Flo came home late, lurching her way in.

“Goo-night, Ianto, Goo-night,” she sang happily.

As he thought, she was very drunk.

And in the middle of the night he crawled softly to her room and set a bit of candle amid the shavings in the box under the bed, upon which Flo lay snoring soundly. Then he went downstairs and set light to the rags and newspapers lying about. The curtains flared up and presently there was a crackling of wood. Ianto waited near the front door, and when the heat became unbearable leaped out of the cottage shouting for help. He looked up to the bedroom windows and saw a fiery glow.

“Help, help, people,” he screamed, running down to the row of dwellings near. And when people came rushing out, he added in a crying voice, “Inside is Mrs. Parry. A wall of flame is about her room. Where is the water engine so that we can rescue her?” And he ran about and glared at his burning cottage frantically, going near it as though he would dash in.

They took hold of him. “Ach, too late it is,” they said, “better one corpse than two. Shrive! up you would in there.”

For the cottage was blazing merrily.

When the fire engine arrived half an hour later there was little left to rescue. But when the water played on the cottage and the smouldering flames were put out, amid the wavering smoke and blackened walls there advanced a figure swathed from head to feet in a white sheet, that clung wetly about it. The frightened face of Flo looked out from the folds.

“Ianto,” she wailed, “Ianto.”

He glared at the advancing figure.

“Jesus,” he screamed, “she has arose from the dead to haunt me!”

And he fell down spluttering in a fit.

While the people attended to him, Flo was saying to a neighbour, "Oh, what an experience. I got out of bed to ease myself and lo, when I turned round everything had burst into flames behind me! I had had a drop or two and thought I was seeing things. . . ."

But she had quickly sobered, and snatching a bed sheet from a drawer she had dipped it in the pitcher of water and edged round the flaming bed. She ran downstairs, but the way to the front door was barred with flame.

" . . . then I thought of the old stone copper—it's big enough for two people. And there I buried myself, pulling the old iron cover over me. But I thought at one time I was going to be cooked, it became so warm. . . . Oh, but thank God dear Ianto is safe. . . ."

Coming out of his fit and hearing these words, Ianto wept:

"Oh, Flo fach, lovely it is to see you. There's awful my agony has been! Flo fach, Flo fach, gone is our little home. Say you how it caught fire?"

Flo looked at him; and for a moment her teeth were bared. But she said:

"What a fool I was! When I got out of bed and lit the candle I must have thrown the lit match amongst the clothes of the bed. A drop or two I had had . . ."

Her eyes were upon Ianto, and in them there was a malignant triumph and malice.

And he wilted and looked back at her humbly.

## THE SILENT ONES

by LAWRENCE POWYS

I stood beside a dark pool on the heath;  
I watched the water's blackness from its edge,  
Stirred by a bubble rising from beneath,  
And once again resolving, silent, still.

Lonely I felt as I stood gazing there,  
I and this deep black pool upon the moor,  
Watching each other with unmoving stare;  
—And darkness stole around us stealthily.

Black night surrounding us with crafty haste,  
Joining in us the blackness of our souls;  
Standing alone upon that dismal waste;  
—Myself against my own worst enemy.

# HOLY SMOKE

AN ESSAY IN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

by P. R. STEPHENSEN

HOLY SMOKE ! The incense rises to heaven ;  
I've Sophie to meet at a quarter past eleven ;  
'Tis early ; here in God's House I'll meditate  
Before the Cross ; I pray she won't be late . . .

*[Clock strikes eleven.]*

Not of every martyred agitator is it the lot O Christ  
To be exalted to the magnitude of a divinity  
And to be worshipped with genuflections  
By people of an extreme respectability ;  
And not of every field-preacher is it the destiny  
To be questioned, however simply, upon metaphysics,  
By a tolerant Roman Noble, seeking instruction ;  
But surely, Most High, it is the calamity of iconoclasts  
To be accorded the frequent unction of idolatry  
By subsequent idolators, literal-minded persons—  
The True Beard of Lenin has magical properties  
And You hang there—Yourself You could not save.

—Field-preacher, hanging there O so mournfully,  
Vouchsafe us just one little miracle to show  
This age of unbelievers Your godliness.  
Unpin Yourself, sad Butterfly there exhibited,  
Flutter those drooping limbs—Speak, and appear !  
Ah, silent Rock of Ages, stuck with crustaceans,  
The limpets are falling away from Your storm-washed  
sides ;  
Vouchsafe a miracle—stick 'em on again.  
Grant us a modern one, we are critical . . .

Doubtless the most spectacular sleight-of-hand  
(Alas, we have only the word of John to rely on)  
Was the instantaneous vintage of mellow Cana :  
Six waterpots of stone, of two or three firkins apiece !  
You were no god of prohibitionists, then ;  
That was Impressive ; well played, Sir ; encore.  
A good one, too, was the blasting of the figtree—  
That vegetable so sensitive to reproach  
Which rightly incurred Your celestial displeasure,  
The seasons being made for god, not god for the seasons.  
Others are not so splendid : the Gadarene swine  
Hardly deserved their doom, cheating the butcher.  
Given Your powers, plus a sense of humour,  
Lenin would have sent the demons into Pharisees . . .

Vouchsafe a modern miracle, let the Papists  
Carry the prayer-book through the House of Commons !

No answer. Sulk then, felon stretching taut  
 Your wooden muscles on the gallows-tree,  
 Worshipped by snivelling women and masochists—  
 Abandon us in your abstract Kingdom of Heaven !  
 Keep your eternal Bliss !—I'm off to hell,  
 To tempt the devil to place some orders for coal  
 In Britain, to relieve unemployment ; even though  
 The devil is beyond temptation, being a Bolshevik,  
 The original Insurrectionist, paid by Moscow.  
 The dwellers in hell have abandoned all hope  
 And in England they have abandoned hope and glory :  
 What are You going to do about it, Redeemer ?  
 Appear, appear ! Well, do the Other Thing,  
 Vanish, and don't pretend to come again . . .

—The Bishop will preach tonight an exhortation  
 To follow the Golden Rule, or the Rule of Gold :  
 He loves his neighbours, the Bishop, on quarter-days ;  
 He shears his flock, Good Shepherd, with regularity,  
 And his heart is filled with love, like his gut with food.  
 He has a lightning-conductor on the cathedral,  
 Trusting in god, with assurance doubly sure :  
 And he tells us to repent our numerous sins . . .  
 But we have no Conviction of Sin whatever,  
 We'd get ourselves psycho-analysed if we had ;  
 We know the wages of sin, at Trade Union rates,  
 But we'll die, and be damned, and rot pro bono publico  
 Freely-bequeathing our corpses to market-gardeners  
 To rise on the third or thirtieth day as turnips,  
 Fighting, Sweet Jesus, to live while we are alive.

—Oh, when they came to arrest You in the garden,  
 Why did You not say, *Turn the Other Ear* ?  
 Why did You not call down 12 legions of angels  
 To scatter the multitude armed with staves and swords ?  
 —That would have been a smashing proof of Divinity,  
 Unless the Roman soldiers had quelled the brawl . . .  
 Your present silence, Wood, is much more worthy  
 Than that rash boast of power unfulfilled.

—Tush, I am shamed. You know Your god forsook  
 You.

I have no salt to rub in that Wounded Side.  
 Peace, gentle Jesus, be with You ; and Your like . . .

—But Grant us, Old Gods of the North, to resist our foes,  
 Returning a stronger blow for each blow received !  
 Grant us to hate with passion in our blood,  
 Grant us the death of heroes, unforgiving,  
 And failing a rescue, let us die with a curse.

[*Clock strikes.*]

Holy Smoke ! My prayer has ascended to heaven—  
 I've Sophie to meet. It's a quarter past eleven.

# DEATH OF FINANCIAL NAPOLEON

## FINANCIER'S FATAL FADE-OUT

### Mystery of Ninks' Death Traced to Weird Obsession

(BY OUR STAFF CRIMINOLOGIST—TREVOR BLORE)

GREAT has been the stir created by the fatal fade-out of the famous financier, Silas H. Ninks, and the consequent revelation of his financial condition. Rumour has been rife, and it is due to the great reading public to expose the false insinuations of certain sections of the Press.

Ninks was not a knave. Perhaps he was a fool. At least he was the victim of an obsession and the machinations of an inimical international combine of business men. Until yesterday it was not known to anybody but the clam-like valet of the great man, and the leaders of the combine mentioned that Ninks suffered from a very peculiar aberration.

After days of unremitting toil and investigation, our special staff criminologist paid a visit to the Ninks mansion last night, and, armed with certain facts he had gleaned, succeeded in grilling the oyster-valet of the dead man into a confession. He has sifted the truth of this sensational case.

The most peculiar manifestation of a strange obsession was discovered.

Ten years ago, Ninks, awed by his rapidly growing wealth, bethought himself of a way to be reminded constantly of his consequent responsibility to himself and his business.

He started lighting his pipe with a fifty dollar bill, but then he was ordered by his doctor to give up smoking. Next he started to paper his study with gold certificates, but this was barely started when he discovered dishonesty among his workmen and discontinued the project.

For awhile he was in despair as to the means of accomplishing his desire.

He was determined to have a constant and steady reminder of his wealth in a very obvious form, as his memory was not quite what used to be.

#### That Function!

Finally it occurred to him that he must associate his desire with one of the necessary functions of life. He could not breathe ten dollar bills; he could not eat gold certificates; he could not sleep stocks and shares. He could

not drink pearls dissolved in wine, as his doctor had forbidden him alcohol; and having had the misfortune to be born in a "democratic" country, he could not buy himself a title in the British peerage.

Then there burst upon him the glowing idea associated with the least dignified of all the necessary functions of mankind.

Without delay he built in his various homes and offices luxurious strong-room cubicles, to which he alone knew the combination, and retiring to one of these regularly each day, was strikingly reminded of his responsibilities by his necessary use of gold certificates and bills of large denominations.

In normal circumstances this should have given no cause for alarm, but just one short year ago this strange secret came into the possession of an opposing financial syndicate by some devious means.

For long they pondered it.

#### Purged and Penniless.

Could they bring about the ruin of their opponent with this knowledge? The senior member of the syndicate spoke of publication of this secret, but it was quickly pointed out that this would have no effect upon the financial status of Ninks.

It was the junior member of the insidious syndicate who hit upon the Napoleonic plan that brought about the downfall of the financial colossus.

By subtle scheming he introduced a trusted servant into the Ninks ménage as cook, and he supplied this ally with a rare and highly effective purgative, to be administered in dishes she prepared.

So began the downfall of the great Ninks.

#### Run on the Bank.

He could not free himself from a usage of ten years. He must have big bills and gold certificates in his retiring rooms. With tears in his eyes he besought the greatest doctors of the land to rid him of his undignified affliction, which sent him flying to his bizarre strong-rooms at all hours of the day and night.

But he did not reveal his secret, and the best of the medical profession were baffled, working as they were in the dark.

At the same time the opposing syndicate made a strong attack on Ninks in the great Bull Street Exchange.

Normally the financial giant could have withstood this drain upon his immense resources but with the other hidden drain upon his health and wealth he was lost.

For a year he fought gallantly on, but, eventually, down to his last half-million or so, with poverty staring him in the face, he gave way to the terrible strain and took his own life.



MRS. NINKS.

# DUNG OF PEGASUS

by PETER MEADOWS—PART V

A NIGHT OUT : LOOKING FOR LODGINGS : CHAPTER THE TENTH

"Come in," I mumbled, growing vaguely aware that someone was battering the door; and lapsed back, pulling down the hazy window of half-sleep again. Two men entered and began sticking small squares of paper with printed numbers on to the odds and ends of lumber in the attic. I watched them idly from behind the transparent barrier of this inattention which, while noting all that was done, attached no meaning to it. Abruptly my mind awoke to the outrage of this intrusion, and I ejaculated, "What the hell are you doing?"

"Structions," said the small bald man, and stuck 31 on the only framed picture we possessed, a water-colour by Norman of two lovers surprised amid wine and spilled red cloth against an arras wavering with greenish moths of colour.

"Here, that's mine," I remonstrated.

"Oh, is it?" he said. "Well, you better get your stuff out quickly if you don't want it sold. Public auction. It's nothing to do with me, but don't say I didn't warn you if you see the whole lot go for fourpence."

"Eleven o'clock," added his sad tall companion. Then leaning forwards and scrutinising me earnestly, he continued: "May I ask you one question, and not a word more?"

"What is it?"

"Young man, are you saved; are you washed in the blood of the lamb?"

"What the hell do you think——" I stuttered in rage; but he raised an apostolic hand to calm me.

"You won't answer me? You won't. Ah, but who am I that you should answer me? Don't, please don't."

"He swore on the Holy Bible how he'd ask someone that every day," put in the other, "and he likes to work it off early and have a clear day, and on someone harmless; and that's all, and nothing personal whatever, so don't get waxy. It does him good and it don't do you no hurt what I can see. Come on, Bullswool."

"What's wrong?" I asked in despair; but again he retired behind the unsatisfactory formula, "Structions."

"Wait a moment," I pleaded, and pulling on my trousers over my old flannel pyjama-pair, I hurried out. All the way down the stairs I found a turmoil of round black tin trunks, their once glossy paint scraped and dented, and bulging telescope baskets ragged at the corners and exuding the dirty lace of drawers, their scanty straps eked out with clothes-line. The two families below were also moving then. I discovered the landlord standing bewildered on the ground floor amid a pile of the ancient machinery that had littered the backyard. Several men were tossing these bars and wheels about, it seemed, without any intention beyond the production of as much dust and noise as possible. The air glowed with the clanging clouds

of rust, as though one were in the middle of some gigantic workshop of the sunset, among Titans melting the metals of colour in some trampling smithy.

"What's the matter?" I yelled.

"All out yet?" answered the landlord, an old man, very deaf, with a beard like the pads women used to wear in their hair.

"I don't even know why I have to go."

"You've paid your rent."

"I want to know what's happened."

"So you've got all your things out?"

"No," I bellowed.

"Then you'd better."

I turned in desperation, leaving the inferno of the rusting sunset, and climbed upstairs once more. I stopped on the second floor, seeing one of the women tying up in brown paper some pans with dripping still congealed in them.

"Can you tell me what's wrong?" I asked.

"Oh, the place's been condemned on account of the rats," she said. I remembered dimly something about a plague scare.

"They might have given us notice, that's what I say. Government, he says, go and talk to the Government. Anyhow, I got two days' rent free, and to think I almost paid him for the next week yesterday, but there was something seemed to stop me. I often get a feeling like that, it's Providence, it is—just before my second baby fell in the fire and died screaming—they did tell me they'd never have believed he could have lived the night out, but he lingered in terrible pain till twenty past ten—and as I was saying, I went to pick up a box of wax matches and something came over me, I can't explain it—just like that, the thought came into my head, it's sudden death to eat wax matches, the ends being first-rate poison, and right on top of that I hear the screech, and yet some persons say there's no God—"

"Yes, yes," I replied, and rushed upstairs.

I found the two men trying to break in the door of the back attic, the Geneva Clock-mending Agency. A sullen hoary old gentleman lived there amid a horde of pet clocks, all of which he kept wound; and muffled alarms went off and hours were sounded at all times of the day and night. We never saw any sign of a client. He had two large padlocks on the door, which he could open from the inside through a square hole he had sawn in the panel. He was now refusing to open and vacate his premises.

The tall man followed me back into my room and took me aside mysteriously. "You see that there," he said in a half-whisper, pointing to a charcoal study of Ray's, a nude girl sitting in a chair. "Did you take that picture?"

"Yes," I said.

"Did you take that there from a real live woman?"

"Yes."

"You don't mean to say she sat there like that while you took her?"

"Yes."

"That's rough, all right. But she's a well-made girl all the same; she's got a nice face," said he, looking somewhere else altogether.

"Yes."

"Now what I want to ask you is this. Could you tell me where that girl lives? I'd like to meet her. If I said I knew you, would that make it all right?"

I gave him Joan's address, maliciously.

"She's got a nice face, you know," he said critically, with a parting look, not at her face.

Sentimentally I took stock of the attic.

There was the torn and drooping curtain of green baize, hung across the middle on a piece of cord, charred up one side where it had caught fire one afternoon from a chance match. My bed with one end propped up on an armchair. The carpet that I had doubled up for a mattress—the first night I had slept on some spread-out newspapers and woken up to find the wire had left a pattern of pain all over me. Ray had wisely chosen a broken canvas stretcher. There was the sewing-machine stand which I had converted into a writing-table. The shutters I had made out of green blind-slats and linoleum to fill up the smashed attic windows. It kept out most of the rain and wind. The slope of the discoloured ceiling scrawled with drawings, telephone numbers, insults and other memoranda in charcoal. The floor thick with dust and ground-in cigarette-butts.

Sentimentally I went over and had a farewell glance round the slanting roof, filled with fragments of basins, chair-legs and orange-peeling, where one could lie at a pleasant angle and stare at the clouds, which tormented Ray with a vain desire to paint their proud hulks of silver. He would not admit for the moment that anything else was worth painting at all. From here one could drop matches upon the pedestrian hats below, or estimate the time by observing whether the shilling restaurant opposite where we had most of our meals was open. We bought twenty-one tickets for eighteen shillings and so got three extra meals, besides removing the temptation to let a week's food go in one afternoon in a wine bar. Ray once lived for several days on a huge bottle of malt extract a benevolent friend had given me—a Russian who kept himself by inventing new indoor games and unspillable ink-bottles.

Then, pulling out a blanket, I dumped in it the drawings I had to preserve, my papers and some love-letters and relics I still clung to with a vague intention to have a kind of love museum from which memory could dredge up the old thread-bare blisses, the careless jests of afternoons long ago gone up in smoke of poetry. All those kisses, my dear, are corked up in that poem, or else they are motes of laughter among my mind's undecipherable flowers. But one cannot put love, like curios of the medical school into a bottle where it is kept from going rotten by some spirits of sentiment. All your letters are lost now, my dear, they went away in a garbage cart with decaying vegetables; but your diluted kisses flavour my verse.

In the other blanket I collected the few spare collars and socks, the books, and Ray's paints. I roped the two bundles

together and threw them over my shoulder, one in front and one behind. My pockets were crammed with the oddments I had forgotten, matches and two stolen hotel glasses. An almost full bottle of claret I pushed in my hip pocket, and I took up Ray's pipe-rack with its half-dozen stinking pipes, and I descended.

It was Saturday. Ray had gone away for the week-end, and I could not communicate with him. I stood at the street corner. Unshaven, unwashed, with my big unweildy balloon-shaped burdens cutting into my shoulder, with the hot crawling feel of dirt where my body rubbed against the clothes, nowhere to go, about three pounds in my pocket, I gazed at the sleek mob passing, secure in their useless jobs, secure in their morgues of morality, contented inhabitants of Hell. Earth is no problem to the earth people. Suicides or clowns, they are all at home in this dark sewer of space. For them its sooty skies are luminous, its halting laughter for them realise my dim conjectures of Dionysian joy, while its domestic troubles snap their backbones. But from the silly difficulty of making an amalgam of poetry and mud, from the contemplation of man's secure and terrified complacency, come my miseries.

Life can do nothing to you. But it is necessary to stand in the gutter, dirty, with your belongings painfully and disreputably slung across your back to realise this truth.

Valerie! I wondered why I had not thought of her before; she lived down the next cross-street.

I found the house, third from the end in a red-bricked terrace, and knocked. There was a long shuffling silence oppressive with that sense of hostile preparation that goes on behind every strange door. At last there came the slap of slippers, the door opened, and Madge's pale hair and face appeared.

"Not to-day——" she began, and then, "Oh, it's you, is it? What are you humping there?"

"Is Valerie in?"

"Yes, she's upstairs snoring a treat. I'd be glad if you waked her; she'd swear at me an hour if I did, but she won't mind you."

She was sitting up in bed, searching her purse, as I went in.

"Lost some notes, forget how many," she said, "or did I pay for those drinks? Or did I leave a deposit for that hat? Hallo, sit down on the bed and look more cheerful. I'm getting up, anyway. Chucked out? Come and live here. Of course. Don't mind me, look the other way if you want to blush, I won't. Throw me over that chemise, and would you mind fetching the red slippers out of the wardrobe, and you'll see some garters hanging on the spout of the geyser in the bathroom. Thank you. Fine day yesterday; drunk as a lord. Won five guineas on a horse with such a funny name; now what was it? My God, it was a pair of shoes I bought. Where have I left them? Perhaps they're downstairs. Chuck me that blouse. Thank you. I'm ready now, though I mayn't look it. Come on."

There were no shoes below; so we had lunch, joined by Madge, by Jim, an ex-jockey suspended from the Turf for a

year for some underhand business and exiled since for ever by the potbelly he had acquired, and Mr. Stropple, a blind man who stuttered. Valerie's principle in cooking was to put cream into everything.

"I remember what I did with the money," said Valerie. "It wasn't a hat; and it wasn't shoes either, they were too small after all. It was a white fur, but it's quite safe because they're delivering it. It looked so sweet I couldn't resist it, though it's summer now and I won't be able to wear it for some months yet; anyhow, it's sure to be cheaper at this season, and when winter comes along I'll be able to sell it at a huge profit."

"A poet," said Jim, fixing me with a malignant vacuity of eye. "Write the advertisements for cough medicines, do you?"

"Shut up," said Valerie; "he's coming to live here."

The blind man broke in with a shattering high-pitched cry, a stammer of anguish, something like a thund'rous and prolonged sneeze. "Ah-ah-ah-ah—"

"Will I hit him on the back?" I asked.

"He's only talking," said Valerie.

"Ah-ah-ah . . . I hope you feel at home, Mr. Meadows," he said, reaching at last a gabbling coherence.

"Yes," I answered; but recovering from this hacking seizure of cordiality, he had retreated behind a mask not of one sense only but of all. I began to talk to Madge, vaguely aware of the glazed and pallid anger of Jim, the soliloquies of Valerie, the occasional ear-splitting convulsions of the blind man, whom no one noticed in any way—he did not indeed seem to expect them to attend.

"Come out here," said Madge, "I want to show you something." She led the way to the drawing-room. "Now as a fellow-artist I want to have your opinion of those pictures there. Your true opinion, now."

I gazed at some daubs of sprawling sunflowers and bomblike apples on glass.

"Splendid . . . how lifelike," I murmured, looking round uneasily to make sure no one could overhear me. There was no one. "Splendid," I said more enthusiastically.

"I wanted your real opinion," said Madge, "and I'm glad and proud I got it; I value your opinion, it's not like others': they don't know what hard work there is in things like that. I'm sorry you can't see the things I painted from, or you'd see what a good likeness they are; though I must say I'm rather proud of the shading. What about a beer?"

"The shading," I said feelingly, "is wonderful."

Jim was called in to fetch the beer. He opened it, grumbling to himself, "... poets, pussycats, that's all. I'll take up knitting, I will . . . tie ribbons to me braces . . ."

I heard all about the picture the cat spoilt. There were a dozen bottles of beer.

The afternoon passed agreeably.

Valerie came in at half-past six. "I've invited everyone to a party. I found I'd put a couple of notes in the toe of my shoe. I must have done it for safety when that fellow was

making love to me in the taxi. God knows I'm much more sensible when I'm drunk than when I'm sober. Opal's coming, and Vera." She started pushing all the bamboo furniture round the walls, putting the silver-framed photographs of waxen wedding groups behind the gilt clock in the glass case, and moving about the cottage piano with diseased keys like the grinning fangs of some dragon with pyorrhoea.

Mr. Stropple came in and sat in a corner, making around him a silence appalling with its threat of fiendish cacchination.

Lemons, blearily pompous, and Wizart, lanky and derisive, arrived. Madge at once proudly displayed her art. "Peter thinks they're fine and he's going to see they get a chance if I send them in to the next Society of Artists' show. Of course, I know they're not perfect—for instance, I ran out of red in that last one, and Jim put a bottle down on that one there when it was wet, which isn't *my* fault."

"Art!" said Jim. "I don't see no use for it whatsoever. I'm damned if I do, and that's that. What's the good of cameras if you're going to take portraits that way? It's no *use*, is my way of putting it."

"Exactly," said Wizart. "The impressionists, by taking light as an analysable quantity equally present all over a picture, destroyed the centralising principle of chiaroscuro and made the next development inevitably the flattening of form to a primitive pattern. After which, you will admit, I hope, that the step to the intellectual abstractions of futurism and cubism, etc., was nothing, next to nothing. It is very refreshing to find someone who takes such a clear-eyed view of art, and would deprecate Picasso not as something furthest from a camera but as an insensate product of one."

"Oh, shut up," said Valerie. "Beer."

"Would you mind explaining all that to me again?" said Madge earnestly to Wizart. Lemons stood in the middle of the floor with upraised glass.

"I lost the most beautiful woman in all the world to-day," he said. "And for why, for why?" His low and solemn boom was disturbed by the arrival of Opal and Vera. He drank his beer in puffy annoyance, waiting for the clamour to cease.

"Something to save my life," brightly pouted Vera. Everyone drank to that salvation.

"Oh, look, Vera," cried Opal. "There's some peacock feathers; I couldn't stay with them here, truly I couldn't. Either they or me must go. Oh, I'm that unlucky to-night. You saw me walk under that ladder—how could I have done it? I don't know what's come over me lately; I'm that dreamy I don't know what I'm doing. If anything goes wrong—oh, Vera, don't say it can be Johnny!" She clasped her hands as if imploring the omnipotent Vera to avert the blow of destiny.

"Don't make a bloody fool of yourself," she said, "and drink that wine."

Everyone was now comfortable.

Vera sat on my knee. "What happened last night? I'm dying to hear the truth, I mean your account of it," Valerie said.

"Oh, just a bit of a shindy," she explained. "Billy and I were talking rather loudly, not quarrelling much at all, but a window got broken, you know how these things will happen; it was a beer bottle, it slipped out of his hand, purely an accident, and the landlady came out into the backyard and said she'd ring up the police; such a common woman, I'm glad to get out of the place; and I certainly shan't pay for the glass or what I owe her, she was so insulting, but we've got most of our things out."

Lemons rose up again, his glass of beer held aloft as though it were an amber torch by whose light his blinking eyes saw the company.

"I lost the most beautiful woman in all of the whole world," he began.

"Somebody's drank my wine," cried Opal. "I put it down here. Oh, who could have done it?"

An indignant voice retorted from Jim's corner. "I sees you drink it yourself, I *sees* you."

"Give her another," said Vera; "it's only her way of asking for it."

Wizart sat down at the piano and began playing the scherzo of the *Ninth Symphony*.

"Couldn't you play something beautiful?" pleaded Madge. "None of this jazz; something about roses. I have painted them and I *know*," she added mystically, "and so does Peter."

"What the hell are you talking about?" burst in Jim.

"Mr. Meadows and I are artists," said Madge crushingly. "He knows too; he'll go far, mark me. I know real genius when I see it."

Wizart was gloating; he bent low over the piano, coaxing out some pianissimo crooning chords, merely moving backwards from major to dominant.

"How lovely he plays," said Opal.

Jim and Lemons started working out racing problems on an envelope. Opal danced with little flips of her hands. Madge took advantage of Vera rising to sit in her place.

"Kindred souls," she began; but I rose firmly and danced with Opal. We stopped in a corner among knobs of bamboo.

"You are beautiful," I said. "I understand you. Kiss me."

"Ooo," she screamed, "who's that?"

"Don't wake him up," said Valerie, "he's blind and he yammers. Yes, my first husband was one of those; he married me because I had a face like a boy, a Florentine profile, and didn't like chocolates."

"It's a great thing to meet a kindred soul."

"So we were still there when she arrived back; alone she was. What have you done to Rybble? I said to her. Oh, I murdered him, she said with a leer. Buy me a drink and I'll show you the blood-stained razor. A girl with character, as you'll believe when you hear she had seven pounds of his and all his cigarettes at that very moment in her bag. When they got to the hotel and into the room, Rybble began to feel sick and he spewed into the fireplace, quite naked, too; he says it's a wonderful new sensation, spewing nude."

"The place had been stables once and you could always smell the horses; and you call yourself a lady, I said."

"By driving all shadow to the edge by a flat lighting as in the *Olympia*, Manet had already shown the bridge to Gauguin. Modernity is too wide a term if one is to use it to cover all the stylistic implications of primitive naïveté, the still unexploited possibilities of the prismatic analysis of light, together with what I may call colour- quartertones, and linear aridity of design."

"It's the human gesture, I tell you. How are you going to bring that in? Sensuality."

"I was that frightened I didn't know what to do. I said, Fetch me a cabman, as dignified-like as you please; and she went. Now how will I have the courage to pass that door? I said. And then she fetched the cabman and I could have shrieked. He was the dead image of the man on the top floor I told you of. Can they be luring me away to murder me? I thought."

"A house on the edge of a cliff, and hollyhocks and flowers all around; and books to read, and God's own wind coming up from the sea. Nothing sordid, nothing like this; hollyhocks and God's own wind blowing cleanly over the waves—how happy I would be. That's my wine, you bitch."

I went out into the backyard and vomited up the claret.

Then Madge and I talked in a corner. I tried to listen but I could not follow a word; all my other senses seemed in my control, but that of hearing had encased itself in my head as in some hollow shell on which sounds bumped without penetrating. I saw Opal flapping her hands at the music, Vera standing flushed, suspicious and drunk, Valerie talking interestingly to herself, Wizart gloating through lowered lids, the gory roses painted by Madge, Lemons muttering into his beer, Jim pale and malign, drink washing the Adam's apple in his throat about. There was an impersonal noise, but no articulation reached my mind.

Madge took my hand in hers and began to lead me from the room; whether to show me some pictures, to help me to get sick again, or to consummate the purpose Jim saw in the act, I do not know. In any case, she did not do it, for Jim leaped at us with a howl just as we got to the door, and dragged me down. I kicked and tore at him; everything was black, a wriggling mass of black bruised with red. I felt very weak, conscious of nothing except a sense of futility, not interested really, only wanting to escape, to die.

Talk, talk, and blinking jets of thick light.

I was sitting in a gutter with Lemons, the wet mud in which my hand rested was very pleasantly cool.

"Come on, old fellow," said the drunks' friend, and we rose and reeled down the road. I wanted to say something; what was it? Gradually I felt the thought coagulating in my head.

"You're a good fellow," I said, "good old fellow . . . best I know . . . good old fellow . . . good . . ."

"You know, I lost the mos' beautiful woman in the whole wide worl' to-day, and I tell you why . . ."

"Goo' fellow," I murmured. He continued; he had at last found his destined and appreciative audience. On we went, towards the Domain, to sleep among the outcasts whose blankets are newspapers.

#### A NIGHT OUT: THE THREE LOVERS: CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH

I SUDDENLY found that I had lost my friends. But there were girls to watch, and in the spreading warmth of the wine I had just drunk I decided that I never wanted to do anything but stand by the gutter and watch the quick happiness of girls. Thousands of girls all talking to each other with incredible detail about last night and this morning; back further they remember only with difficulty. To be a lamp-post was my extremest ambition.

I watched the girls done up in powder and electric light, done up too in a kind of tissue-paper of bundled excitement. They had all just finished laughing or were about to laugh the moment they passed me; and now they moved in an echo of disturbing merriment, a cosmetic of the mind. In my blood the sense of jostled perfumes and the tendril-like invitation of saturnalian silk mingled with the illumination of wine. For a space I was perfectly content to stand on a platform of the spirit above this ballet of gay faces, wielding a baton of command, as though its disorderly chatterers obeyed some complicated rhythm of my fantastic blood, some necessity of my will. Then the tantalising detachment of this frank lechery of stocking and bangle and glittering smile swung me aloof and lonely at a street corner.

The street corner at night, most hazardous of all ravishing stations, calling for swift action and the almost automatic repartee of the gutter. I thought of one fellow I had known, who had collected an enviable number of amours by no other method than an incessant and unvaried flippancy. Of course she wouldn't smile—delivered with a smirking imbecile intonation. That had been at the seaside. The girl with an immense round mop of packed tiny curls, down by the rocks. Billows fell back to the tumbling rattle of a tram. Moonlight and the electric glare were strewn together in a crumbling tide that glowed dully on the road or welled into a drop of liquid silver on wire or tramline. You expected the drops to dissolve and run like water, in white streaks, zigzags of moonlight, broken globules of twisting light, instead of which they stayed, stars of ice raying illusively, or flung away into the blank night air. Grapes of mercury, some rare poisonous vintage of fire. You could feel the sensation of crushing them, spirting moonlight into the mouth. I tasted the first cold gush of a metallic fermentation, half lifting my arm toward them. Not in these fruits of the moon could I find the aphrodisiac of bravery I desired. Lanterns in the blood. I contemplated the phrase tenderly. And who were all these people ebbing about me? I looked round in a dazed contempt. Shout it at them. Let them fall on their knees before the majestic anointment of beauty's kingship in a phrase. An intolerable arrogance set me swimming

half-way up to the sky, ducking my head instinctively to escape the thorny stars. I *would* shout it. Let them run me in. I hoped they would. Only a fierce mumble came to my lips; and before my guttural dismay had passed, I found I had been sold an evening paper for the second time that night. And it was a rotten phrase, anyway.

A small dark girl standing near attracted my attention. She too was glancing about, and our eyes met. Was that a vague smile or a flush of annoyance? Was she waiting for someone or was she also a desperate adventurer into the mysterious gaieties of life? Or was she a whore? I moved a little nearer, pulling my hat down in a furtive tug of courage. How I envied that fellow with his idiot's formula of self-introduction. Of course, women don't care what nonsense you talk as long as you carry off the situation effectively and give them a chance to capitulate with a graceful denial. But the knowledge that they want to be kissed will not bridge one inch of the difficult way to their leaning mouths. I consoled myself, with a certain amount of truth, that it was not so much nervousness as that I thought out a dozen masterly gambits in one breath and had not chosen one when they were all dislodged by another dozen; the seducer's fallacy of literary fastidiousness. More than ever I envied the idiot's faith in his feeble formula.

Troy; façades for ever falling backward pastoral wenches giddy in the heels clanging bijouterie of the tram line French no good excuse me moonlight behind those buildings in the Park with all its preening flowers paint your portrait moon in a rubbish-tin of stone tin can't be stone let's bowl the moon down the heavens the moon's a hoop when a girl shuts her eyes her head goes through it clowns of love pretty clowns seen you before supper mausoleums of the moon all this concrete rather like Babylon when you were a Christian slave what's the time fortune teller no use to fight against the stars pinheads stuck in the vast pincushion of the bulgy sky Troy.

The toe of one small shoe projected out over the gutter, and she was moving her foot up and down through air. I felt the whole change and pull of her muscles along the leg as she did so: the delicate adjustment of curving surfaces, the strong calf and thigh, the conscious rigidity by which we pleasantly convince ourselves of our flesh beneath the clothes. She stood there gently savouring the obedient beauty of her body. Then a youth with a spotted tie and a high-waisted coat stepped up to her, said something I could not catch—was it merely "Sorry I'm late," or had I narrowly missed the perfect formula for picking up a girl, the one infallible method of approach?—and they walked off. But it was I who had thought poetically about her thigh. I was her lover really, though she would never know it. Poor comfort.

I watched them go between exasperation and relief, and then moved off to a neighbouring café where dingy coffee was sold, a club for indigent but unscrupulous talkers.

I passed the table where a fat cherubic-cheeked man with one beaming tooth was talking to a youth with weary hands. He was, I knew, discussing either the ripping Mass he had seen

yesterday or Ineffable Bliss—a frictional means, I had gathered, of piercing the fluctuous veil of Maya to reach that dimensionless point where God taps the spirit.

I hurried past and sat at a table in a corner, from which I inspected the trifold rapture gleaming on the large beatitude of the pink saintly face above the grey frayed collar pressed with all a pauper's care. Each smile touched eyes and lonely tooth with the same high-light of ecstasy. He was explicating some minor matter of ritual, and his hand kept nervously drawing a cigarette-case from his pocket, opening it to display three dragged butts, and then shutting it. Every time he opened he became aware of the betrayal of his poverty in that most pathetic of all thrifty collections, the hoarded oddments of abandoned tobacco, derelicts snatched furtively up in the streets; and he quickly put it away, a moment later to stare again at the same shameful confession tendered by himself to the world.

I had a careful look at the waitresses. When the coffee was brought I essayed conversation.

"Have you seen that friend of mine to-day—you know, the one with red hair?"

"I don't think I have." She poked a bit of lace down under the grimy black of her blouse with the blunt end of her pencil.

Across the gap flew the slightly squawky accents of the cherub of the Black Mass, "Delightful acolytes . . . delightful acolytes . . . de-light-ful . . ." Someone in the distance dropped a walking-stick and undammed the fluty silence.

"Had a hard day to-day?"

"Oh, they're all hard here." She was balancing herself on the heel of one shoe and making half turns, holding on to the back of a chair. Her hair was almost all out of curl, her hands weren't clean, the skin on her mouth was cracked. How gladly I would have taken her.

"That's rotten." She was leaning against the corner of the table, the right angle of the stone creasing the dress in between her legs.

"Yes, the old woman's got her knife into me for no reason at all. She's trying to squint round the pillar now to see what I'm doing. I often wonder what it is I keep on living for."

"When will you——"

The question completed itself, but was drowned by the clatter as a form slumped down beside me and a gruff voice said, "Some Turkish coffee, young girl, and be quick about it, or I lay information about you where it do you no good."

She retreated, and I recognised the bore—Wolinski, a Polish Jew whom I had encountered first at Pillig's studio, where he was trying to sell a pile of battered frames, or, failing that, a pianola attachment.

"I know how to talk to 'em. Talk hard and they be civil, talk civil and you get the potato peelings." He leant back with his fingers stuck in his waistcoat, complacently smiling. He had a hooked nose, one ear was missing, one eye was bigger than the other, and without being cross-eyed he gave the effect of being so. Altogether, I thought, he looked as if he had been conceived during a pogrom by infuriated soldiery and

brought to life by some accidental Cæsarian section of war before his time.

The sabre was the midwife to the wretch  
And saved his worthless neck for ropes to stretch

I wrote on the table top, and felt better for this catharsis.

When I am ill or wenchless or sad in luck  
Give me the blubber of some phrase to suck.

I added under the former couplet.

"You write, ah!" said Wolinski, giving a vivid imitation of a man struck by an idea. "Would you so nicely write out some addresses for me? I am no good, you guess, at English. Jest one or two, mister. No? Yes?"

"Why should I do the damn things for you?" I grumbled.

"You write them, mebbe I pay for your coffee. Ah, that get him. I pay half for your coffee if you write. No? Yes?"

This was not the first time I had written out some cards for him. For though he could read sufficiently to tell one card from another, either he could not write or his hand was unreadable, and he never lost a chance to get some cards transcribed. While I wrote he cocked his eye with an oblique leer at a waitress tidying near. She was middle-aged, with a thick fringe over her eyes, and chinless but fat.

"A beau-tiful girl. So lifelike, so bosom. But what do I care? I have women more filled, oh, yes, more rolling, you know what I say, more a handful, not such as you snap in your fingers, crickcrack, and you hear the backbone chinkle. Not for me. Lovely circular woman, as fat as custard, you say, is it not, yes? When they see me at the door, Come in, mister, they say, Come in and sit down and have some tea; you must be tired tramping round, and tea will freshen up you. There is no old clothes as my husband is wearing his, but you must have a cup of tea and come back to-morrow and there will be a pair of trousers. Next day, sure enough there they are; and blushing woman. No more said, ha, ha! Another good customer. There's one I know whose husband goes to sea; she sells me something every Wednesday, and how for? you ask. She buys them special to give to me so I call. Ah, they like a sturdy man. I see their eye as it looks at me. Come in, Mister Clothesman, my husband is out. It's a fine work, it is, and a great comfort to ladies whose husbands go to sea or are whippersnappers. Yes? Come in, mister, they say, and have a cup of tea."

A dull rage gritted in me at this coarse confidence in his seductive person. I examined the twisted scar of his ear, the red nostrils, the astute and lustful little eye, the dirty complexion, and tried to convince myself that he was a liar. But I knew it was all true. For this ugly creature life offered an eternal round of strong-backed sluts in heated kitchens, their hands dry and mealy, their faces reddened from bending down to stare at scones in ovens, their hair like threads of cotton, all the softness scorched out of it. But under their aprons, for all the bleached plainness of their faces, owning white legs

unstained by varicose veins or suburban ethics. I thought of the prostitute I once passed in a public park. She lay sprawled and snoring on a seat with her skirt pulled up around her waist. She had the comely legs of a young girl, that through the stockings of moonlight seemed ivory undinted with a kiss. But she had an old woman's repellant face, and she was really old.

"Come and look at the clothes in this cupboard, she said, and a pair of old boots soled once but pinching in the big toe."

And I who could anatomise a kiss, and analyse into every spiritual echo the fantasy of the senses, could not even win these homely haunches. I hated Wolinski.

"We bumped heads, my stars; and there we were on top of all the boots."

I threw his cards over to him.

"Thanks you, thanks you. I have a fine ring of rubies and emeralds. Would you like to see? Ah, a fine thing. I sell one like it yesterday to a solicitor. Reduction to you."

"I don't want it, take it away, I don't want it."

"Mebbe you know one who do. Jest look at it. No nice girl you like to pop it on? You get any—any girl in the whole world with such a fine ring."

I was forced to inspect the ring, a cheaply pretentious article obviously paste, and tell him again I didn't want it. Unwillingly, and with a great contempt for my inability to realise the remarkable bargain he was offering me, he wrapped it up again in two pieces of tissue paper, placed it in a square white cardboard box, and hid it in some deep inner pocket. Patting it from the outside, he dropped the rôle of foiled benevolence; his voice became very tender.

"If I were a rich man, you know what I do?"

"Buy a top-hat," I suggested in exasperated inattention.

"Well, yes, I would buy a top-hat," replied Wolinski in surprise. "How you know? But I would do other things as well. I would stay at all the best hotels and not pay the bills."

"But you could do that now."

"No, don't be so silly; how I have chance to get in big hotels. I must be first rich, and all the big hotels run out their carpets to get me in. I come up in a red-painted taxi, the men at the doors they salute, the manager say, Which room, which room you like? One with lavatory attached all on your own? I tell him. I tell the band to play, I order a cocktail, I live like a king or two, but I wouldn't marry. The women are all after your money, oh, yes. I say to her, You live with me—best rooms, the band, you can have cocktail when I do or almost nearly. I buy you clothes and socks and several hats, but if I marry you you go and put them down in my name and I have to advertise in the newspaper, My wife is not to be trusted. Oh, no."

I ceased to listen. Then through the dull stretch of my inert musing Coppinger thrust his hearty red face. He came round the pseudo-Moorish pillar.

"Having searched the adjacent sewer," he remarked, "and finding no corpse, I assumed you had slipped in here."

"How you like ring for nice girl?" inquired Wolinski confidentially. "Your friend tell you it is good bargain."

"But what *is* a nice girl?" answered Coppinger. "Nowadays maidenheads are quite out of fashion except among Lesbians, I assure you."

"Ah," said Wolinski sagely, uncomprehendingly.

"Personally I am all for this fad. In fact I am a publicist on the matter. As President of the Society for the Painless Prevention of Virginities, I ask your suffrage. As Secretary I will take your name; as Treasurer your money. All books, I need hardly add, are kept in a special code of my own which has so far baffled the police."

Wolinski was puzzled, but continued hopefully.

"You do not know a nice girl? I bring you to one if you like. Not very far."

"Is she a virgin?" asked Coppinger.

"Perhaps. If you like 'em so. But very nice girl."

Coppinger meditated. "There are probably some ten million virginities at the present second chafing up and down the roads, stairs and switchbacks of the earth. They are being decreased, you will be relieved to learn, at the rate of some five hundred a minute. The statistics are not too reliable, for sufficiently hidden reasons. What is this girl's name? I will call on her and leave a tract."

"Ah, you not catch me like that," began Wolinski cannily, his daze broken by the sense that all this was merely an excuse to do him out of his brokerage.

"Good-bye, then," said Coppinger. We rose.

"On Fridays. Ver-y best incense. Nothing shoddy. . . . Ecstasy snuffled from the table of the heretical seraph.

Outside we passed George entering with Sylvia. I swaggered up with a drunken accentuation, though by now I was sickly sober. "That cursed George is like the Hound of Heaven," I remarked peevishly.

We walked through leaden streets stained with drab lights and gaseous flares of consciousness, concertina buildings and a drizzle of dim thoughts receding like stretched elastic, then shooting back alarmingly into a whirl of oblivion.

"Sergei's Club," explained Coppinger. Beer was the only liquid on sale. You had to wash your own glasses out. A frieze of women dancing with baboons added to the soporific melancholy of beer poured on wine and whisky. The flocs of thought bobbed up at wider intervals, vanishing into fogs of inane bliss, and the gurgling wash of the subconscious.

I danced. Coppinger was talking in a corner to a girl whose head was pulled about by laughter as if by bits of string. The woman I held was so thin I could feel her backbone and her ribs. Coppinger was leaning over his girl and her jerky merri-ment. I must say something to my woman. What could I say? What?

Beauty the dragging-net of eternity hauling in moons and you you you kisses like fishes pretty one little one what do you live for? I am a poet a god if you know it I know all about you all about you I have untwisted every little fibre

of your little lascivious soul but I don't know what to say to you.

Coppinger was talking volubly still. I made another effort.

"Hot to-night, isn't it?" I said.

"Hot as hell," she said. The broken-down piano rattled from within her, skeletons making love on galvanised iron. Coppinger kissed his girl behind the ear, still talking. A shuffling kaleidoscope of puffing lights. Coppinger and his girl were moving off behind the curtain that fell like my convulsive anguish.

"See you home," I said, desiring horribly to take home anyone else in all the world rather than this girl.

"Sorry, booked up," she giggled. "Cheer up, honey. What about to-morrow night?"

Then I lost her. I talked loudly in a corner on Plato and myself. I shook hands with a Dutch sailor who smiled vacantly and replied always by amiably nodding his head.

"Get out," said a girl, "what do you think you're butting into?"

I looked round the corner and was promptly knocked down.

Immediately there was a fuss I could not localise. After an indefinite period of wavering noises fringed with electric light, I found myself in the street.

I laughed, I and the chuckling moon. Yellow, I said, yellow garters yellow as yellow as yellow yellow let's get a tram.

I boarded one. Then I was in the gutter again. I looked up at the angrily whirring stars. My mind heaved for a moment, and bolting houses and roaring trams collapsed hotly upon me. I picked myself up from the debris of Pleiads and Insurance Companies. The stars were clear again, a coolness of power flooded me, and drowned me, and I drowned.

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## THE ROBOT

*by* MAX BLORE

SHE fell in love with a robot,  
A thing of steel, and wires, and switches ;  
A man-made man.  
Her love was vicious, torn from the heart of hell,  
Love unappeasable, yet deeply irritant.  
And the robot only rattled  
When she bruised her tender arms in hot embrace,  
And stained her lips with fiery kisses  
On cubist lips that smiled metallic smiles.  
Torrents of wild words bared her soul  
Naked as her nude body ;  
Shameless she pleaded,  
But the robot only clicked.

# VARIA

by A. J. M. SMITH

## I

PUNCHINELLO in a purple hat  
Scattered a handful of grey dust,  
Singing the while a song of this and that.  
They asked him why. He said because I must.

Punchinello in a purple hat  
Stood upon his mother's breast and sang :  
He sang of stars and flowers, this and that,  
And for a little while the welkin rang  
And clattered like a long dingdong  
That churned the Milky Way to cheese,  
Whereof he carved a moon. His song  
Treated of ecstasy, of things like these :

Cupid and my Campaspe, kisses, cards ;  
Pledged cocktails of a woman's eyes ;  
Tears idle tears ; tall trees, and dusty shards ;  
Love, laughter, beauty, apples, angels, flies ;  
Mermaidens winding their silver tails  
About the heart, combing the sea to waves ;  
Nightingales and girls, and nightingales  
And brooding boys ; coral and cool caves.

Whilom he sang, the dust awoke :  
There was a stirring in the inner bone ;  
And somewhere scarlet, for he saw the smoke ;  
And somewhere fellowship, he stood alone.

## II

Young Punchinello in his salad days  
Encountered boredom in the hairy Spring :  
The mucous membrane of the muddy ways  
Was all he saw of what the shepherds sing ;  
His trees were lanker than a blue-nosed prude ;  
His barren world—another unhatched egg,  
And then the new green shoots erect and nude  
Set him a-quiver like a woman's leg.

He delicately skipped among the mud,  
Feeling Apollo in his body quicken  
The sluggish current of his congealed blood  
Until it foams in mists that rise and thicken  
To prick with a tingling effervescence  
The icy thing he likes to call his brain :  
He feels the earthiness of countless peasants  
Stir in his loins and sprout like little grain.

Then April sent a gentle wind, and all  
 The budded trees shook down on him a sweet  
 And elegant shower ; he felt his footsteps fall  
 Softly, caressing the mud, and saw that his feet  
 Were cloven, and knew that his limbs were hairy.  
 All over the flowery mead he chased a maid—  
 And caught her—changed to no laurel, but a Mary,  
 To whom he played the part the Angel played.

## III

Punchinello in an old plug hat  
 Sat up behind his unfrequented horse.  
 The beast was drooping like a piebald Spratt,  
 Ribbed as an umbrella, final as divorce ;  
 It was as weary an old bag of bones  
 As the *Deus ex Machina* on the seat,  
 And found an equal anguish in the squawky tones  
 The taxis lathered on the sprinkled street.

Punchinello for the better cheer  
 Muttered among his stubble some old rhyme,  
 Some old wives' tale (his eyes went bleary)  
 Some song remembered from his singing time.

He pulled the rug up, and with beery eyes  
 Scanned the pedestrians for likely fares :  
 These left him sorrowful and somewhat wise—  
 Some went to women and some went to prayers,  
 But Punchinello waited where he was :  
 The price of oats was so and so and such—  
 Cheaper, indeed, than oil and air and gas,  
 And yet, upon the whole, not cheaper much.

When that I was and a little tiny boy  
 The hounds of winter did not foul the spring,  
 A drowsy numbness did not rot the joy,  
 All night the nightingale ceased not to sing.

## SNOW

by LAWRENCE POWYS

THE snow comes soft against my window-pane,  
 Like one afraid to enter and who peeps  
 And goes a space,  
 Who then returns—noiseless—to look again,  
 Yet dare not show his face.

The snow is building round my walls a tomb  
 To hide me and my dark soul from the earth,  
 And yet at morn,  
 I shall break forth from out the sheltering womb,  
 With all my sins reborn.

# YOUR POWER AND MY IMAGE

by ELZA DE LOCRE

## I

My beauty does outlive the moon  
And there's no magic in it,  
Many a lass wears for bright crown  
Her beauty's golden image  
And when that beauty's ripe and past  
She sickens with the minute—  
No glass can cure her since the moon  
Reflects not seas that drown.

## II

Outside in the orchard the cool fire of evening glows  
Burning the blossoms on the apple-boughs  
Till soon they will be but the ashes of moonlight,  
But not till then will all the birds stop singing,  
Those voices always crying to the West  
Because it was there the forgotten voices faded  
And all the deathless faces moving always  
Like foam upon the surges of the air,  
I stand unseen but not alone,  
They speak, because they do not know I listen . . .  
Pale Queen of the Mountains, take courage, the day  
draws near  
When blood shall feed your fountains and the bees  
ransack the stars for honey.

## III

I picked a rose  
And caught in my flesh the thorn,  
And I thought of him who died  
On Calvary, being born  
Out of the loins of sin  
And meek and virtuous love  
To be crucified again,  
I looked at the cruel blood  
Bleeding about the thorn  
And I laughed aloud at the pain.

## IV

How like to Satan is this hand of mine,  
How cunning these fingers, twisting these words  
To shapes I never guessed at, dragged from me,  
And jeers at my remaining fears, so pitiless  
I see my hand stretch forth to take the pen  
To wring from me remorselessly all secrets  
That I had longed to keep from common ears,  
Yet I cannot stay my hand, nor would I.  
I have my pride and laugh at it—  
The devil may take me!

# NORMAN DOUGLAS

AN ESSAY IN HUMANISTIC VALUES.

by JACK LINDSAY

IN a generation of fiddling æsthetes trying to explode into bombs of nervousity and achieving only a thinner brand of æstheticism : a generation alternating between exasperated efforts to get contact with life, and tired to hell of everything, and particularly of cliques to which nevertheless they are damned—and the would be traditionalists who hear Cocteau's piccolo-echoes of Nietzsche's trumpet in the Call to Order after the wagnerian debauch (to which be all Glory!)—there is only one man whom we can respect. He is Norman Douglas.

Douglas is not primarily a literary man, though he has written one very great book and a number of others which buttress it by expanding that central definition of character. But perhaps for that very reason he stands out among his frenetic or jaundiced fellow-writers as an adult among a pack of schoolboys. It is the shallow taunt at him that he has produced the school of smart cynical novelists ; but one might with equal justice say that Wagner is the father of Jazz. Douglas is inimitable, because he is individual. He is in fact the only modern writer of any distinction that it would be impossible to parody adequately. He is the only one among them all that gives the impression of a man who has lived fully and has not lost his head, or any other portion of his anatomy, in the excitement of discovering that life exists outside the covers of books. No doubt, this balance proceeds partly from certain limitations in Douglas' character. That is admitted. One is not trying to palm him off as a Shakespeare. He lacks passion altogether. The poetic universe of tragic exaltation is closed to him, but so also are its quicksands of russianism and tensions begotten of the rotted nerves, all its sick sweetnesss. Douglas is the completely not-sick man. He is perhaps the only dignified human being left on the earth.

For though tragedy is avoided by his character as a ludicrous predicament, the depth of his human sympathy reaches a secret world of contempt where it joins hands with the poetic judgment ; so that, although shakespearean ardours are not for him, his universe is complementary to the shakespearean and ultimately included in it. Shakespeare might have been more interested technically and personally in the work of Joyce and Lawrence if he were alive to-day than in that of Douglas ; but he would have looked on Douglas as a brother, and the others as part of his untamed menagerie, the earth to be dominated by the whip of his laughter, his contempt, and his unsundering agony. Douglas is the man who has not been sick.

He is the poet who by some freak of nature does not need to be a poet. We may feel that it is not fair for a man to step into so easy a conquest of earth, and so may doubt the validity of his conquest if he cannot prove the precipices his sense of humour has scaled. But if Douglas may seem unaware of many of the quags of experience, it is not true to say that he

has floated facility into this disdain. His point of view is the fruit of long discipline, and as arduous an exercise in the hellenic arts of civilisation as a dancer needs to give her body. We feel behind his work an awareness of all he disregards, an athlete's training in comfort and avoidance of stress : a metaphysic of self-indulgence subtly resistant of all corroding christian morality whether of sentimental purity or walpurgis-night. He has not been sick—morally, I mean, for no doubt his curiosity as to all the wines of the earth has not always been equally lacking in curiosity.

It is obvious, and true, to say that Douglas is an hellene. Such adjectives have lost blood on account of their indiscriminate application ; and this one in particular from its attachment to palely-rosy pagans and remotely angular æsthetes—but even so it retains a certain coherence which is revived when it is Douglas' malignly beaming face that appears within its frame. Of course, there never was any such thing as the pure hellenic concept. But nevertheless there remains, after all the maiming and sterilising effect of the historical conscience, a concrete core of individual genius which we can only call hellenic since all later manifestations of the same energy have been comparatively sporadic and mixed. The hellene, it might be said, supremely had his feet on a concrete earth ; but this definition breaks down when we ask : What is an earth ? For the hellene first of all has taught us a subtle subjective philosophy which sees man as the measure of all things, and yet resists any solipsistic efforts to disperse the elements of the sensorium into a common illusion. The hellene sees the measure of man himself in Desire, first-begotten of Chaos ; and since desire is dual, it necessitates an external world in which to view the drama of its own energy. Nevertheless, the more the hellene realises an externalisation is necessary, the less he can take it seriously ; for the more he is forced into a concept of objectivity, the more he realises its dependence on his own antithetical balance of self. Therefore we see that the hellene, who alone has posited a faith in life, an acceptance of its necessities, is also the prime sceptic of the universe, and balances his faith always on a fundamental mockery.

This is the true humanity which is tolerant of all manifestations of instinctive life out of the aloofness of its enormous contempt, its derisive and sympathetic perception of itself mirrored in the most trivial or imbecile expression which is yet intuitionally sincere. This is the shakespearian humour, delighting in human idiosyncrasy—not tenderly, with a hidden sentimental commiseration for self ; but with a cruelty so profound that it has passed all the little torture-chambers of the moral-social-religious animal and accepts life with passionate thanks for its preposterous lack of significance. Is Shakespeare outraged because Cleopatra nobly shares the bedraggled instincts of Doll Tearsheet and the slippery integrity of Cressid's little frightened soul ? Not he. That is all part of the joke. Nothing could stop life from being worth living except a deodorised condition of society in which the individual would be depressed into stereotyped virtue and harmlessness. Shaw, or Shelley, represents a deeper anti-poetic force than any fat-gutted vulgarian

of a stockjobber. For, left to himself, the stockjobber would never be aware of the existence even of the social order. He would merely know that he was part of a sacrosanct organisation with which he must not tamper; and he would either relapse into a social automatism or blossom quietly into some charming idiocy or private villainy which might quite possibly become the material of art—and which would in any case add something to the reality of the human scene. As it is, stimulated by his prophets, Shelley or Shaw, he puts his financial and social weight into any scheme calculated to turn the earth into a vulgar ant heap, an efficient hell.

Norman Douglas seems to be the last man who is making a dignified protest against all this. For the Lawrence bombs of indignation, with their echoing detonations among the American intelligentsia all sitting waiting for their loins to think, make the mistake of imagining that anything can destroy an abstraction but a balanced human identity, intellectually controlled and sensually active. Douglas is the last man sufficiently ruthless and contemptuous to sympathise with humanity—not with man, the downtrodden factory-cog, but with *humanity*, which has been more or less crushed out of men, and which can only be seen flowering in odd crannies and eccentric corners of occasional individuals.

Therefore, unbanally, he loves life, with the sense of Minute Particulars Blake proclaimed as eternity. His love is no vague communism of emotional expansions, but founded on geology, herpetology, antiquarian research, beauty, and oinology. Douglas has passed examinations in international law and made himself an excellent pianist. He has worked in the diplomatic service and drawn up a government report on the pumice industry of the Lipari islands. He has industriously gadded, eaten, drunken, talked, and passed a life of socially furious leisure; but he has at the same time developed all his scientific curiosities and kept his intellect working. All this is the discipline to which I referred; and out of it proceeds his style, vaguely labelled urbane, but possessing little of the dreadful complacency which usually goes under that term. His work leaves one with that concentrated sense of plenary satisfaction that at times one earns over a particularly happy dinner when, one's digestion for the moment working perfectly, conversation suddenly assumes a godlike ease in its exchanges.

This urbanity devours every detail, whether geological or scandalous, with equally avid gusto, trusting to the inner sense of human values to sort them out and put them in due place. A passionate curiosity supplants the moral sense; and there is no need to define ultimate values, since unless they are implicated fully in the direction of the search they can have no value anyway—and to state them is merely to give fools the chance to misapply them abstractly. No, let us keep to the interesting habits of Calabrian fowls or the sempiternal search for good wine. If we cannot erect the soul's fortunes there, how are we likely to find them in a metaphysic? That is the reason why Douglas, following Nietzsche, lays such an emphasis on diet. Rightly, he mistrusts the man for whom the labels on bottles have no

message. In such a lack of sensibility he rightly sees the whole itchy rebelliously creaking misfit soul of modern man. To hear him declare: 'The man that believes in vitamins is a —, is to feel that life is after all not without meaning.

Without this essential application of gusto, scepticism must become dyspeptic, rationalistic, more murderous than even christian faith! Only this spontaneous ritual of minutiae can defeat the boredom of the post-christian state.\* The shake-spearean element goes further, indeed; it finds bloody and dangerous nooses of excitement in the impulses of life. It, therefore, cannot achieve the Douglas aplomb. Its balance is ecstasy. Its scepticism one that doubts the reality of either life or death (particularly death) except as symbols of desire. It is therefore closer to the subjective side of the dynamic acceptance I have defined. The more intellectually concerned Douglas-scepticism turns to the objective side and is content passively to let the kaleidoscope flutter along, at the same time actively judging it—not morally, but for its fitness in the æsthetic of humour.

Why *South Wind* is so great a book is that it shows this element of mind trembling on the verge of complete intellectual self-consciousness without being devitalised. Keith, Calavoglie and Van Koppen summarise Douglas' complex and antithetically conceived epicureanism. They express a whole "practical metaphysic." (The only way to define such a self-contradictory matter is by some such human images, because thus alone can the barrenness of the intellect seeking to make a "theory" "practical" be overcome.) And yet the vitality of the human scene, its comoidic irresponsibility, is not hurt. Nepenthe is the Earth; and in a few days, ostensibly describing the subtle undermining of abstract ideals by actuality in the fable of the holidaying bishop, we are given a whole experience of an earth—a full gallery of its humours, with the intellectual awareness defined in the three chief male characters gathering force as the tendrils of consciousness infiltrate the more or less inert mind of the bishop, so that the book ends inconclusively on the surface. Actually, however, it has reached a carefully considered culmination in the mind of the reader, a final knitting of the whole moral evaluation of earth.

That is why *South Wind* is a unique book. It does not relate to the annihilation of the inert earth by a shattering lyricism, as in Rabelais; nor to the lyrical evocation of character across the surface of a distorting social organisation, as in Balzac;

\* As examples of the genteel boredom of English letters, a condition undoubtedly amounting to actual damnation (accepting Blake's definition of hell as the 'being shut up in the possession of corporeal desires which shortly weary the man, FOR ALL LIFE IS HOLY'), let me quote these two reviews of *South Wind* at the time of its appearance:

"I cannot compare it even with such predecessors as *The New Republic* . . . enough to oppress me without giving the sense of power . . . Humour indeed, the book has, if, indeed, humour can be so inhuman, or at least so exotic."—*Nation*.

"Cleverly written, but somewhat tiring."—*Athenæum*.  
or this of *In the Beginning*:

"I suspect a moral somewhere, but I was not sufficiently interested in the tale to look for it."—*Life and Letters*.

nor to the lyrical bombast by which Dickens delivers his character-projectiles upon a moribund mankind. It is highly objective in method ; but in a very different way from the sturdy narrative of a Fielding, the disguised moral rancour of a Thackeray, or the dutiful perception of a Trollope.

This objectivity comes from a complete acceptance of phenomena as such ; but it is penetrated by a personal vision, a vitally articulated judgment. Its only forerunner was *The Way of All Flesh* ; but the comparatively limited humanity of Butler, with its many rationalised terrors, made that book only a partial vision, a judgment that breaks down at the central points of affirmation.

Douglas alone then of modern novelists has found his personal relativity, the method by which he can truthfully integrate his material. A few other minor successes can be pointed out. Ronald Firbank's for instance ; but the limitations of Firbank's perception are so vast, that his tiny achievement, valid enough, is only a pretty afternoon-tea-party byway. Lawrence is too exasperated by external matters to make the initial efforts of self-knowledge which would enable him to group his genuine emotional imagery about an individual coherence. Joyce is too much at the mercy of adolescent conflicts, and though throwing up multiform suggestions, is ultimately only a realist exploded into faulty fragments by the bomb of celtic irresponsible poeticality. Conrad, through some moral shiftiness (i.e. codes of honour) destroyed his painfully-splendid constructions in drama. The social novelists . . . well? What is the good of abusing such industrious fellows? Let us leave them to their deserved high incomes, and return to literature.

There is no need for Douglas to write another full-length novel. Certain minds reach maturity slowly and then pack into one work the whole essence of their experience. Probably Douglas has been well-advised to put his energy into fantasies such as *They Went* with its fine allegory of the destruction of earth by christianity (his pretended explanation in the 2nd edition is part of the joke), which is also a fable of the creator's eternal job of reconstruction before the malice and instability of the external world ("O bother the Almighty!")—and *In the Beginning* with its noble figure of the lonely satyr . . . surely a justified and excellent self-idealisation by Douglas. Elegiacally, in his garden with his wine, Nea-Huni looks out upon a demented world in which gods and men alike have lost all rudimentary decency.

He is sitting talking to his sole lingering friend :

" 'And yet I may be sorry when they go, the poor fools ; I have grown so accustomed to them and their little miseries. Go they must. They are past our aid ; they cannot stand alone, like we could. And where two or three are gathered together, there the mischief begins . . . So drink, old friend ! Drink to our friendship, the only thing worth living for, and the only thing worth fighting for, and the only thing that suffers no change ; drink to the confusion of both gods and mortals. Really, I don't know which of the two is more contemptible.' "

" 'Neither do I,' declared Azdhubal. Then raising the cup to his lips, he said solemnly :

" 'To the crocodiles, with both of them ! ' "

# THE POISON MIXER

by STANLEY SNAITH

SUGGESTED BY PAUL LENI'S "WAXWORKS"

EACH midnight when the city lies asleep,  
 with aguish torch that, stoopt by draughts of air,  
 dazzles me with darting glooms,  
 I come by profound tunnels from whose roof  
 great bats hang clenching with their wings shuttered—  
 down, secretly down by those dark nerves of the earth  
 into my chamber. Here in my loneliness  
 shut in the earth aloofly as the pismire,  
 with crucible and philtre as my tools  
 I lackey a king's vengeance,  
 dabbling at strainings of plutonic vineyards  
 to devise faultless dooms.  
 To this one sorcery are my fingers nurtured ;  
 ancedried to this honourable craft  
 I can conceive, create  
 a further spasm, a more laggard dying,  
 to sate the stomach of my lord's wrath.  
 For among poisons I express my will  
 as sensitively, with as straight an instinct,  
 as the stonemason through his dædal hands.  
 From leaves, from obscure roots and sullen berries  
 I gather viperous honeys, acrid acids,  
 from which, by blending, brewing, concentrating,  
 I forge my armoury  
 to unseat the fortress of the staunchest heart.

To-night I have worked with a rare mastery,  
 and bred two draughts of unexampled shrewdness ;  
 one turbid, pondlike-scummed,  
 warted with bubbles that wink like evil eyes ;  
 one brimming its jar with radiance, clear as dew  
 newdropt in morning leaves.  
 These in my service will be equal in cunning,  
 each one a spawningbed of tyrannies  
 that leech upon the body lovingly as cancer ;  
 and both are readied to do miraculous hurt  
 upon some treasoning wretch  
 who questioned the sweet justice of this kingdom,  
 and at sunrise shall savour of its stroke.

This is an honourable craft, I say,  
 for poison is the vintage of all vengeance,  
 birth's dedicated foe.  
 While birth has one mode, one inflexible mode,  
 a harsh unsealing of the crypt of the womb  
 by spirit awakened to its need of light,—  
 Death in its resource is myriadminded,

can hatch swift violence or delicate anguish  
 or slugabed disease ;  
 and he who slays must ponder the modes of slaying,  
 and, faithful to the æsthetic of his craft,  
 must plan as fixedly to outwit the body  
 as leech and midwife in defending it.  
 He will use no resource  
 whose abrupt efficacy might balk his relish,  
 and none not manageable by his own hands.  
 Broaching of veins, colloping of head from trunk,  
 the fall through space, the rack, the furnace, these  
 are slovenly nemesis,  
 death's mystery and terror overlavished  
 that should be portioned from a midas hand.  
 Poison alone is wise and slow and searching,  
 its onset gathers the far ranks of the nerves  
 to ecstasies of immitigable torment,  
 throe into throe imperceptibly mingling ;  
 and leads a man to death and still withholds  
 death, as a skilled embrace withholds its crisis,  
 by delicate delayal.  
 All life must wilt before it ; it inherits  
 earth's darkest necromancies ;  
 one drop holds shackled lightning, as the first drop  
 of rain is heavy with the birth of thunder :  
 and yet of its puissance is it frugal.  
 It obeys scrupulously its proper instinct ;  
 whether it coax or macerate the tongue,  
 whether it mouse the chambers of the brain  
 or consume maw and bowels down to calx,  
 it goes intent upon its chosen duty,  
 admitting no frustration.  
 A man might well be proud of such an end,  
 to be so kindled and sounded, to suffer beyond  
 the exigent limits of being, and be proved  
 capable for such cyclopean pain :  
 this is to live the vividlier in death.

There is no joy like this dispensing of death,  
 when men are turned to jiggling marionettes,  
 grotesquely puppetting their own natural semblance,  
 and I the midget-master amusedly  
 plauding each gesture and moan so wittily turned.  
 The fierce convulsions, the quaint gobbling eyes,  
 the unacquainted mouth struck babbling-dumb,  
 each acts its part up to the final pang,  
 until the vulture Stillness hovers upon the body ;  
 the faint pulses subside ;  
 and the springs of blood, retreating to their source,  
 leave lineaments of panic parcht in the face :  
 and only then is justice mollified.  
 This is dominion, this is godliness :  
 this is to banquet on such exaltation  
 as god must know, when, for an idle whim,

he scatters seedlings of plague,  
and sees them sprout and prosper, and run like balefire,  
lighting such panic that men flee their homes  
confusedly, flinging their wounded lives behind,  
and can no more outstrip the doom they bear  
than a tree running could escape its leaves.

But a god's cruelty is a passing mood  
that fades when retribution is observed.  
Mine is a hunger growing in secrecy  
with roots deep in my life,  
that shall not be assuaged until mankind  
is driven before my more than godlike wrath :  
primrosing lovers, lechers, almsmen, kings  
snatcht from their trivial lives and levelled in  
the commonalty of death ;  
nor shall I spare my hand  
till the men-maggotted earth is scavengered  
for the luxury of a crazy alchemist  
breeding pitiless scourges against his kind  
at midnight when the city lies asleep.

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BOND-SLAVE

by C. HENRY WARREN

"Now you have shared this loveliness with me"
(These were your words) "how can there ever be
Loneliness in your exiled heart, or fears ?
How can you ever again give way to tears ?
So sure an impress on our minds is made,
At chance's handling now it shall not fade :
Let but your thoughts be quiet and your heart
Easy of doubts—this loveliness shall start
To life again, obedient to your word
Who are at will its servant or its lord. . . "

And now to-night your voice rings in my mind
So clearly I could almost hope to find
Your gentle fingers laid along my sleeve,
As on that night I came to take my leave.
Brave was your heart then, braver your eyes than mine
That could not, would not, stay their tears ; and fine
Was the courage that could bring those words to life,
Though each should tear you like a naked knife.
I look around me : everything I see
Mocks at my courage with its urgency—
The flowers ; the poems we have had delight in ;
The pictures ; the lonely bed I'll spend to-night in ;
Music that waits your liberating hand
—Ah vainly I—and . . .
True as your word was then, and true as now
It is, still the unhealing tears must flow :
And thus I stand condemned by that same word—
Slave of this loveliness and not its lord.

SHIRT OF RAIN

by PHILIP OWENS

*Time : 2nd of December, 1592.**Place : A bare room in a shoemaker's house in Dowgate. Stairs descend on right.
GREENE on a mistress, delirious. He is reviewing imaginary conversations with and between his friends.*

GREENE : . . . leaving the forest for a wench in Rome . . .
 Fill up your bowls you fellows, Marlowe knows
 what we were like in those days insolent :
 on Cam I was the merriest young blade
 of all those loitering in study there.
 —Robin had wenches in the cradle, man !
 His barndoor rustlings with the dairymaids
 peopled a village and the fathers watched
 the chastened bellies of their closekept girls
 burgeon like bushes.—
 —In Italy great matrons took him in,
 starving, with soft recurrent charity.
 One noble lady of Bologna found
 on his departure that not only she
 but her young daughter was as certainly
 mothering something—
 —He always loved in couples, cousins, twins.
 No man can tell such fangled bawdy tales
 of journeys into Poland after twins—
 —There is no conquest, he was wont to say,
 of women greater than the morning's warmth
 between the soft breasts of unjealous sisters—
 —mountain lakes of wine—tarn tankards full
 go down old Robin's gullet. River Thames
 holds not more water from the Nore to Kew
 than Greene pissed in his youth. He takes cold ale
 bold in his belly like an old dame strains
 young lovers.—
 —All women love him, he loves only men.
 To manage women, let them love ; when ill,
 no groat, I still have three around me.
 —Two years ago, when Greene was ill from wine,
 they thought him dying—he, who would have drunk
 old tipsy Death beneath his crossboned table
 had he arrived that far—you know his way
 of drinking down his earnings—all these years
 of heated living had not changed his frame.
 The finest slut in London was his mort,
 kept him athirst with golden Rhenish wine,
 he'd never die with virgin bottles there.—
 —There was a time when Master Greene came here,
 the famous poet, friend of Peele and Nashe,
 sat daily there and brought a crowded house.
 Of all the wits the elegantest lad !
 The greatest gentleman of England's realms
 were proud to imitate his foreign styles
 and walk to playhouse with him.—
 —You whore, you think you've got him but he's mine

—The wenches took out daggers over Greene.—
Stiletto waving, Moll went down the street
and Marlowe Peele and Nashe all learnt from me
half of their groundling drama.—That we did!

[*Noise on the stairs. MOLL enters.*]

You're very late—where have you been this time?

MOLL : I couldn't borrow money, so I went
by boat to Greenwich with a waterman
who did that service for a gratitude
he owed my brother—Arthur at the Plough
sent you these rabbits and a heap of wine
is coming in the morning with the tide.

GREENE : Lift me up, my head throbs lying down.

MOLL : I walked along the stream where we first lay
that summer night : now snow is on the fields
and icy flood. When you are well again—

GREENE : Prop up my head—you might have hastened back
instead of wasting time in country walks
while I thought you were visiting my friends.

MOLL : We are your friends, the shoemaker and I.
We make no tavern welcome simulate
a friendship, like your absent poet friends.
Why don't they come? they're nearly all in town.

GREENE : They do come Moll when I desire them to.

MOLL : That's false, you know they haven't been, not one,
else I or Mistress Isam would have seen
one of their shadows dirtying the room.

GREENE : You make my head throb, shouting in that way.

MOLL : There, you must eat a little, lie this way.

GREENE : Look Moll, if Peele or Nashe comes you must go—
They don't like women round the place—the wine!

[*MRS. ISAM enters.*]

ISAM : I went to Master Peele who's just returned
from Devonshire and says he will be here
by evening, having first to undertake
some urgent matters. Five gentlemen were there
and mighty grieved they were to hear how bad . .

MOLL : When will he come?

ISAM : Directly after meals.

I have soup ready. [*Exit.*]

GREENE : What is it like out?
Is the great slide from Paul's to Ludgate down?
Last winter I was skating on the lakes
near Norwich, breaking village ankles
in tourneys breakneck hurtling front to front.
Even the winters weaken nowadays,
apeing the fluted rain of summertime—
no red ears on the schoolboys these ten years.
O for a quick quick fling along the streets
where women's voices like pickpockets run.

MOLL : Wait just a few weeks till a warmer air . . .

GREENE : I never heeded cold—in Poland once
I slept three nights within a snowcrept rock.

MOLL : Only a little wine, drink down the soup.

- GREENE : There's too much salt, too little meat therein.
If we could only sell the memories
of happiness and lust spilt out in youth,
to die in some wineheady bloody riot,
die living, not in sheets, I'd sell all mine.
- MOLL : O Robin, speak of living, not of death.
- GREENE : I don't mean now, but seal a bargain that,
the debtor hour come, one dies alive, with men.
- MOLL : Why speak of death and debts when you are well
—these fancies sicken all your future health.
- GREENE : But what a golden thing it is to die
with voices in the ears and looks of men
in eyes. I'd barter life beyond my death
for such a death. When I was young in Rome
I quarrelled on a courtesan and fought
her pandar and his friends . . . Mornings and nights
and springtime in my head irresolute,
my lips were kissed by she whom men call Time
my head within the circle of her arms.
In that same moment was old Cæsar dead
and Christ was born and Rome flamed to the skies
while after men sang songs of me . . . One rogue
I threw upon the misty floor splashed cold
with ocean surf . . . leaving these hands, so thin,
laid in the warm and flabby breasts, they said,
of Cleopatra. Cold heavy tankards
loosing a colder wine slipped with my blood
before I rang one on the face divine.
She lived with me that moment of all time,
to that perfection short we both were born
and subtly had rehearsed for centuries.
Ten years ago, ten wintered summers long—
If I could turn those years back on themselves,
back to the Roman year and fight again
I should die happy in that lover's brawl.
Listen . . .
- MOLL : No one is coming.
- GREENE : I have been lying on my bed a month
listening for step of Nashe.
- MOLL : Nashe is the bloody blackcat of the deil,
you know you hate him.
- GREENE : I have no fear of Nashe, but Kit Marlowe,
with tales of death and night, chills all my blood,
not for an hour can I forget the things
he tells me with that crazy lying face,
and follow them I must, as empty birds
after another with a mite of bread.
They come at night like gabbling Bedlam men
creeping, to lay their sudden ice cold hands
upon my heart.
Then am I naked on a heath wind tortured,
toes stubbing the heather and the stars
mirth twinkling at my terror underway.
They tell me I must live as long as they.

Kit says that in the end we shall be God
and that the end is but the self-same time
as now . . . long past . . . tomorrow's yesterday.
And every dawn just by the bed Kit stands
with night-stained eyes recounting tales of things
long dust and yet to breathe the future wind.
When in the darkness fears of sure-come death
fall on my stillened heart, so that it seems
to melt, and all its beatings at an end,
he screams about the countless million dead,
of women's eyes that only one man saw,
of men that have escaped this starry maze.
Moll, with a phrase he sends me through the pores
of summer nights and I live thousand lives
wooing a thousand maids beneath the moons
of many countries. Sick,
my soul must take form with far scattered dust
and be strange men and women, and grey beasts . . .
was that a knock?

[MOLL slips out. PEELE and THOMAS enter. THOMAS
sits on a stool smoking. PEELE goes to the bed.]

PEELE : Ho, Robin, just seen Nashe, threequarters drunk
the leaky swine ; why here's a dingy cage
to house a muse in, what's the matter, man.

GREENE : Didn't the woman tell you when she came ?

PEELE : I thought it might have been a simple drunk.
We got held up an hour or so—an old
damned scoundrel from the tall-yarn lipping seas
caught us in Bankside where the Dutch ship lies.
By Jupiter, they have some yarns, these lads.
There is a palace in the west, he says,
where lives the beauty of unnumbered maids,
who walk tall corridors of arabesque
singing wild songs . . . such angry breasts push out
from their cold stems. Little of love have they,
their golden palace fretted on the ledge
shorn from a sable slope of cliff. To that
one cannot pass nearer than he shall see
white lily lucent walls and towers four
each shining like the gossamer and domed
where sunset dew distils a nightcooled drop
to stain below, for in that land, he says,
men catch the dawn upon their tower tops
and other paints no architect will use.
Perhaps those singing girls are fairy whores
kept for the visit of some potent lad
with stouter limbs than buccaneers possess.
No man knows who they are or what they sing.
With white nails clinging to the rock he yelled
—or so the winewashed rascal swore—all night,
Thomas, what was the song ?

THOMAS : "Come live with me and be my love."

PEELE : Not that they'd hear all that sad way away.

GREENE : Once I was seven days hid in a cell,

with fifteen hundred sisters overhead,
 and four of them took turn to bring me food
 each night. O I had money when I left
 to live six months with actresses in Spain.
 While yet a lad at Norwich, coming home
 from lazing in the hay one afternoon
 I and my brother Will together went
 to see our father in his library,
 his pale hands shaking where he sat. To Will
 he gave his fortune, tossed at me a groat,
 bidding me sing my songs to whores on that.
 Well, twenty years I've played, George, and the groat
 is all I have. And I owe ten pounds here.
 When I get well I shall pay all my debts.

PEELE : You've got no money, have you, Thomas ?

THOMAS : A few odd shillings, and I owe each coin
 as many times as snowballs in the Strand.

[GREENE looks towards PEELE.]

PEELE : I. You know I never have a groschen—
 besides, my landlord caught me in the street
 this morning—I can hardly get a drink
 in any tavern nowadays. This suit
 is borrowed, fact is I was hoping
 you might have funds. Why not try Kit ?

GREENE : I have been waiting him, he comes tonight.

PEELE : Tonight ! I thought he was away up North.

GREENE : I have some letters for him—well, goodbye.
 If you should see him first . . .

PEELE : I'll be along tomorrow or, day after.

Hi Thomas ! always in a damned damned haste,
 he's got the only cash between us.

[PEELE and THOMAS leave. GREENE dozes a few minutes.

MRS. ISAM enters and tidies up the room. Chorus of

MRS. ISAM's thoughts with quotes from Mr. ISAM.]

ISAM : He hasn't drunk his soup poor man, now if
 those gentlemen have left him money—then—
 better he sleeps like that, "the wicked talks
 of Master Marlowe has seized on his heart
 and placed it on a pinnacle of fear,"
 and him there far too sick to live it down :
 —if only Isam thought more of his shoes,
 he counts himself among these poet men
 "then in the courts of heaven I shall nail
 the wornout leather of archangel feet
 with brads of silver on a golden last——"
 no groat, poor man, his friends seem just as bad,
 no one to help him, and they never come
 although he daily thinks they do, talks them
 of all they did together—he'll not last
 I'm thinking, many more such days. [GREENE stirs.]

GREENE : The irony and crookedness of things !

At Tyburn Cutting Ball hung for a sword,
 an alehouse skewer : from this only debt
 I would have paid I now must slink away.

Two days upon the streets when I am well
and Robin Greene will have his fifty pound
for these good friends. The windfall mustering
and feasts for roisterly acquaintance.
arch to a moonlight flitting. [Sees MRS. ISAM.]

Has no one been? they mustn't go away,
I am expecting several friends tonight
and one will surely help me to the debt
which weighs upon me.

ISAM: Wait till you are recovered, Master Greene,
sick men have other burdens on their bed.

GREENE: You will go cold and hungry, not because
I came a sick man to your stranger-cares
but for the apearings of another time.
Could I but claim a thought of vanished days
I might give you a song to sell for me.

ISAM: Your wife . . .

GREENE: I have not seen her many years.

ISAM: She sent her love to you . . .

GREENE: She sent her love!

ISAM: Over a week ago, hearing how bad
you lay, she sent her greatest love, by Moll.

GREENE: I have not seen her years, it is too long . . .

ISAM: Maybe she'd help you,—Moll said she was rich.

GREENE: Ten foreign years now. Down in Hertfordshire
by Buggin's Oak there is a place where ponds
dress yellow rushes with fast dragonflies,
and boys with pockets full of pinewood cones
launch stringtied ships . . . Doll's horse drank there
that day

we rode to London, through the straggling camps
of gypsies, and the prentices on Ludgate
hoohollowing. It must be raining now,
no wind, and yet this steady hum, you hear
a gentle humming? If it rains, my friends
may not be here this evening.

[MRS. ISAM goes out to return, reporting rain.]

ISAM: They found a dead man frozen near the Twins,
had slept out all the night, was covered up.

GREENE: Twin-sistered is each destiny, they say,
Fate is two girls born with us in the womb
and growing to us in a slow-made grace
with secret members unconcubinate
with other histories: she, nude and stern,
who rules the quickest youth of poetry
commanded my young voyages. Her whip,
like those of master pirates of Algiers
flogging the galley slaves on sweating seas,
whistled strange melodies to my two ears.
She couldn't know I hated swollen breasts,
her large tits heavy with cerulean milk,
those pagodas of muscle which at night
seemed nipples by cathedral domes.
Each man his fetish—I like shy-turned breasts

a wineglass shelters, little breasts that creep out of the lacework : left the pirate wench who strengthens muscles, keens the drowsy sight, for her twin sister, who is gentleness.

She brought me glowing eyes and comradeship, thousands of tavern nights, and ran amuck with me along the alleys of the world.

In those days I could move the slothest soul with a new sort of terror ; whirl their minds with blackest cedars round an old squarehouse and moonlight-trespasted balconies. What tales of Spanish girls, leaning whitefaced and still behind their gratings ; of the maid at Arles whose buttocks threw a crystal blaze more or less sanctified through all Provence ; of Margherita who when making love scored up the time upon a bedside mark.

These memories are winter beaten birds pecking at apples chill and overlooked.

That was a knock ! Marlowe ! old Kit would come through fifty floods.

[MRS. ISAM goes out. GREENE raises himself in bed, wraps blankets round him. MOLL comes in with food.]

Who is downstairs ?

MOLL : No one, Robin, no one been ?

GREENE : It's raining.

MOLL : No, there is a fine moon tonight, the air is freezing. They picked up a poor dead man next door the "Twins," starving and frozen.

GREENE : I would have slept but you have woken me.

MOLL : You must eat something, Robin.

GREENE : Bring me some paper, ink, bring me the stool.

MOLL : After you've eaten, Robin.

GREENE : Bring it now.

[He dictates.]

Sweet wife, as there was ever any good will or friendship between thee and me, see this bearer (my host) satisfied of his debt. I owe him ten pounds : and but for him I had perished in the street. Forget and forgive my wrongs done unto thee : and Almighty God have mercy on my soul. Farewell till we meet in heaven : for on earth thoult never see me more. Written by thy dying husband, Robert Greene.

[Takes letter and reads it. Tears it up, seizes paper and writes laboriously.]

Doll, I charge thee, by the love of our youth and my soul's rest, that thou wilt see this man paid : for if he and his wife had not succoured me, I had died in the street. Robin.

GREENE : Let Isam take this in the morning.

[MOLL slips out with the letter.]

I am so fat and dirty—not make now conquests and easy fortunes :

no one comes.

It must be raining now I think.

[Written 1921 : revised later.]

EX CATHEDRA

THE next number of THE LONDON APHRODITE will be positively the last.

Despite the constant requests of numerous kind friends who write asking us not to abandon them again to the Squire-MacCarthy-Eliot-Lewis-Transition sort of thing in literary journalism, we intend to stop where we said we would stop, namely after six numbers. If we have anything to express, we shall have expressed it in this amount of space, and we do not intend to fill up the library shelves and corners of our steadfast subscribers with rows and heaps of back numbers, such as may be seen in any household containing a subscriber to Literary periodicals. There has never yet been a literary periodical which has not gone dull after the first half-dozen numbers. We do not intend to perpetuate the abominable habit of stabilising an impulse such as that which motivated the launching of this journal. Such impulses are only too rare. We must sit down awhile and hope for another one later.

Consequently, after the appearance of Number Six, THE LONDON APHRODITE will exercise the prerogative of a goddess, and disappear. We do not intend to let Her become *The Cockney Venus*.

In Number Six, Jack Lindsay rounds off the critique of modernity begun in Number One, with a considered examination of poetry in general, and Hell and modern poetry in particular: with a detailed analysis of the positive elements added to poetry by the experimentalists, and some estimate of the possible future reorganisation of the modern split poetic units into a new verse-drama. P. R. Stephensen contributes a monograph upon Bakunin, with notes upon true and fake revolutionists; and the final remaining space will be taken up by our usual unusual fiction and poetry, together with a reproduction of Norman Lindsay's etching, *The Apex of Life*.

After the appearance of Number Six (in June) the sale of single copies will be quite discontinued, and a limited number of bound sets, complete with index, will be available for subscription at fifteen shillings.

The magazine has just about paid for itself from subscriptions alone. We have never gone round cadging ridiculous advertisements for commodities our subscribers do not require. But if we have made no profits by this procedure, our benediction is herewith to the book-dealers of posterity, who will certainly be able to sell our enshrined sweat at a pleasant premium, grumbling meanwhile, after the fashion of book traffickers, at the wretched state of the Trade.
